

God's Original Plan for Church Leaders

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of entering into God's rest, highlighting the need for humility, devotion, and sensitivity to God's leading. It encourages a deep relationship with God, a reliance on His guidance, and a focus on glorifying Him in all aspects of life. The speaker urges listeners to seek the Sabbath rest, to carry the burden of Christ, and to discern between soul-driven actions and those led by the Spirit. The goal is to experience the presence and glory of God in all endeavors, prioritizing meeting with the Lord above all else.

Scripture: Matthew 11:28, Psalm 139:23, Mark 9:24, John 14:1, Hebrews 4:9, 1 Corinthians 14:25, Philippians 1:9

Topics: "God's Rest", "Spiritual Sensitivity"

Description

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Transcript

Let's begin with a word of prayer. Lord Jesus, you are the head of the church and we never want to forget that. We want to recognize you as Lord in our midst at this time.

We believe you have appointed each one of us to this responsibility. We don't want to take it for granted. We want to humble ourselves, be more devoted to you, first of all.

Have the ears of our heart and conscience more sensitized to your voice. You understand the dangers we are in, Lord, when we are in leadership, with nobody to correct us, nobody to exhort us. Everybody living in respect and fear of us.

Preserve us, O Lord, with your Holy Spirit. Move in our hearts in such a way, not just today, but every single day, that we will lie on our faces before you at all times, and that we will truly be servants washing people's feet all our days. Help us this morning and encourage us and challenge us.

We trust you, Father. We want to be like the branch in the tree, incapable of producing any fruit apart from a constant and open dependence upon you all the time. We know that you are more interested in building the church than any of us are.

Any burden we have is less than 1% of what you have. Help us to share your burden a little more. Give us more fellowship with your heart.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Okay, brothers.

Good morning, everyone. Praise the Lord. I want to begin with a little phrase that's found in Matthew chapter 19 and verse 8. Matthew 19 and verse 8. Here the subject that Jesus was, he was talking to the Pharisees, and the subject is divorce, but that's not what we're going to talk about today.

But there's a principle here in a little statement of Jesus, which applies to many, many areas and to our ministry. When the Pharisees said, why did Moses command, verse 7, that a woman could be divorced by giving her a certificate, and Jesus said, Moses never commanded it. He permitted it, verse 8. That is the first thing we need to see.

It's very easy to misread Scripture, to make a permission into a command, because it suits us, or to alter a command into a permission. We have to be careful. But what we need to see here more than that is what Jesus said.

If you want to know the truth, go back to the beginning. How is it in God's original plan? So the phrase I have in mind is in the last part of verse 8, from the beginning, it has not been this way. Please keep that in mind.

From the beginning, it was not like this. And there was no permission for Adam to divorce his wife. There were no other women there.

From the beginning, it was not like this. And when we think of building the church, and we see what's happening in the world around today with thousands of, tens of thousands of denominations all over the world, and new ones springing up all the time, and so difficult to distinguish where something is a cult, and where people are preaching the commandments of men, the phrase that comes to my mind is, from the beginning, it was not like this. We're talking about the day of Pentecost.

We're talking about the first few years after the Holy Spirit was poured out, and how the early church met. Please remember this phrase, dear brothers, and try to understand how it was from the beginning. Study God's word and see how it was from the beginning.

How God chose Paul to lay down certain principles about building the body of Christ, and he not only taught it in his letters, but he lived it in his life, particularly in his attitude to money, and the strictness with which he conducted his oversight of all the churches. He had this principle, if I seek to please men, I cannot be a servant of Christ, Galatians 1.10. That's how it was in the beginning. Every true servant of God had that spirit that Paul had.

If I seek to please men, I cannot be the servant of Christ. I will not be a second-class servant of Christ, no. I will not be a third-class or a tenth-class servant.

I will not be a servant of Christ at all if I seek to please one man, and that could be a fellow elder. If I seek to please a fellow elder, I'll no longer be a servant of Christ in my church. I will be a servant of men.

So it's very important to keep this in mind from the beginning. How was it? What is the attitude of the early apostles who had walked with Jesus towards their flock? They were very strict. You can see the apostle

Paul when a man fell into adultery in 1 Corinthians 4. Oh, sorry, 1 Corinthians 5. He handed him over to Satan.

Can you think what some carnal Corinthians thought about that? What they thought about the apostle Paul? And who probably said, Well, yeah, he slipped up. It's not so serious. It doesn't matter.

But Paul was concerned that the name of the Lord had been so reproached in Corinth by that man's behavior that he was led by the Holy Spirit, obviously, because he wrote that. And he says, Put that man outside. Don't spare him.

He was standing up for the truth. But that's what saved that man, as you read in 2 Corinthians 2. Not only because Paul was strict, but because the other disciples and the other people who were serious Christians in Corinth, and perhaps I think all the church, supported Paul and did not even visit this man. They shunned him.

And he was left alone outside. There was no foolish believer there who went and showed some human compassion. And that's why that guy was saved, as you read in 2 Corinthians 2. It requires a real freedom from the opinions of men to take a stand in things like this, where the purity of the church means everything.

And I was going to say a million times more than what people think of us, and I say not a million times more, but everything where what people think of us has got zero value. Whether you eat or drink, 1 Corinthians 10, 31, do all for the glory of God. That must be the passion of our life.

God has appointed me in this church to make sure the glory of God is always preserved here. And it doesn't matter what anybody thinks of me when that is concerned. I'm not a politician, I'm not a diplomat, that's what we've got to say to ourselves.

And if you're working with other elders in your church, and you find one of them is maybe a bit lenient in a human way, well, then you've got to be firm, even with that elder. And say, sorry, I don't agree with you. I love you, brother, but not more than the Lord.

The first commandment is not love one another. That's the second commandment. The first commandment is you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your strength, and all your soul, and all your mind.

What's left then? It's from that source that love for others flows. Never, never directly. If it is just from ourselves, we love one another, there are a lot of people in the world like that.

It will be a club, or a congregation, but not the church. So, remember this phrase, from the beginning it was not like this. And I pray that we shall hear the Lord saying that to us many times, so that he corrects the course.

I remember when I was in the Navy, and if I was on the bridge of the ship, which is right on top, directing the ship and telling the person who was steering the ship which way to turn, and you had to keep watching the compass in those days, and if the ship, you know, because the waves and the wind can make the ship move away from the direction. So, initially setting the course did not guarantee that you would reach your destination. You had to keep correcting it all the time.

And this was such a constant requirement that the Navy required us to be on the bridge only for four hours. They knew it would be too much of a strain to go beyond that. Then your watch was over, and somebody took over.

Because you had to be constantly alert. If you allow the ship to drift away, you're going to end up somewhere else. There must not even be a one degree change of direction.

It must be constantly towards the point we are to go, and if the ship has drifted, then we've got to change direction so that we are pointing towards our destination. And that's how we are to lead the church forward. The elders are the captains of the church.

And we have to constantly do a course correction if we find that something is coming up which is moving the church away. In the beginning, a few people come together and we're all going in the right direction. But as more and more people get added to the church, we find that not everybody has the same vision.

And then some of those people can gradually move others in the church so that the direction of the church shifts. Certain habits come in. Certain things that we had given up come back into our lives.

People who had, you know, think of something as serious as this. Believers in our church who had completely given up pornography go back to watching it. And they won't tell you about it, but you'll be able to sense it without their telling you.

If you're in touch with the Lord, you won't know anything about people's private sins. The Lord does not reveal other people's sins to us. But you'll see when a person's cooling off, not only in his devotion to Christ when he's probably becoming a bit hard on others in a human way, or perhaps becoming very lenient in some areas in a human way, both drifting to the left or to the right.

You can sense, hey, something is wrong here. I remember in the early days in CFC Bangalore, I found a brother who was not really seriously following the Lord. Not one of the elders, but one of the brothers in the church.

I said to him, after the meeting I walked with him, I put my arm around him and I said, brother, I want to tell you something. I can't stop you from falling away from this church or from the Lord. But I'll tell you something because I watch over your soul.

I'll warn you about it at least a few weeks or months before you actually fall away. And then, after that, it's up to you. We can do that when the numbers are small, and I could do that only when the numbers were small.

When the numbers increase, we need other brothers. Other brothers came up as elders and they could help me. But this business of shepherding people is not an easy thing.

We need to distinguish between a brother who's like a sheep that's gone astray, slipped up sincerely thinking the pasture was this side and ended up falling over a cliff. That's one type of believer. Drifted away.

The other type of believer mentioned in Luke 15 is the prodigal son. He didn't drift away. He rebelled and said, I don't want any more of this and went away.

And Jesus taught us you've got to distinguish between the sheep that accidentally went astray and the son who rebelliously went away and treat them both differently. You've got to go after that lost sheep and carry it on your shoulder, however inconvenient that may be, and bring him back. But the other one, you're not to talk to him or send him any money, let him starve, let him reach the level of the pigs and then he'll come back.

That's the love of a father. Very few elders have that type of strictness because they haven't seen what God is like. This is eternal life that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

That's how Jesus was. He could turn around to Peter and say, you are Petra, a small little stone, but on this rock that you have confessed thou art the Christ, the son of the living God, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. And Peter, I give you the keys.

You can open and no man can shut and you can shut and no man can open. You can bind and it will be bound. What an authority in the presence of all the disciples.

And one minute later or two minutes later to the same Peter, get behind me Satan! To the same person. Two minutes later. That's how it was in the beginning.

He loved Peter so much. It wasn't the wishy-washy type of love that so many Christians have today. It was a strong love that desired the best for Peter that wanted him to be a man of God that told him, you are going to deny me three times before the cock crows and I will not pray that you will not deny me.

Let me paraphrase Jesus' words. You will deny me and you need to fall because you are so proud Peter. You think you are the best of these disciples, but you are not.

You don't realize your weakness and the only way, I've tried every other way to humble you, but you have not been humbled. Now the only other way, it's the last resort, the last method that God uses to humble a man is to allow that person to fall into sin, which God hates so much. That's not his best method.

It's not even one of his methods. It's the last resort. I've tried every other way to humble you Peter and you don't succeed then you've got to fall.

That will humble you. Satan has desired to sift you and allow Satan to do that so that you fall. And boy, Peter, when you come back after that, you will be another man.

You'll never lift up your head again thinking you are somebody. You'll bring 3,000 people to Christ with a 15-minute sermon and not just anybody, 3,000 of the most difficult people to convert, Jews. Try converting one Jew today.

3,000 converted with a 15-minute sermon and when Peter, when people come up to you and say, your fellow disciples come to you Peter and say, wow Peter what a wonderful word that was you'll shake your head and say I know what I did six weeks ago when my Savior was being tried. He never forgot that for the rest of his life. And sometimes God will allow something like that to happen to us where it may look as if God did not stand with us at that time when we fell so deeply.

Sometimes he may reveal it to others like in Peter's case, like in David's case. I've noticed in some cases God will not allow anybody to know about your fault. I asked the Lord about this once.

I said, Lord why is it? I know two believers. I know personally what happened. Both fell into exactly the same sin and it was pretty serious.

And Lord you exposed one and you did not expose the other. They were both servants of God. One was publicly humiliated because his failure and sin was exposed.

The other was never humiliated. Lord I want to learn your ways. Eternal life is to know you and your ways.

And the Lord told me, and this was many many years ago because one was humble and the other was proud. And I never forgot that, what the Lord showed me. This was way back in the early days of CFC's 1975 or something or 77 or something like that.

And I saw how much God values humility because that is the characteristic of his son. The primary characteristic of his son which he said to others, learn from me for I am humble of heart. That God values that so highly that he gives grace to everyone who humbles himself and will even cover up the person's failure permanently.

So that not even in eternity in heaven will anybody know where that wonderful servant of God fell. That is God's way. And God hates pride so much that even if the man is God's greatest servant, he will expose him.

This is light and darkness. Humility and pride. They are two opposites.

From the beginning that's how sin came. When you think of from the beginning, that phrase, from the beginning before Adam sin came through pride. Like the Lord tells the anointed angel who became the devil in Ezekiel 28 your heart was lifted up.

Turn for a moment there please, Ezekiel and chapter 28. Can an anointed person lose the anointing? Yes. How did the first anointed person the first anointed person in the universe the anointed cherub, verse 14 you were the anointed cherub verse 12, you had the seal of perfection full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

Anointed cherub how did he lose it? He could not submit to authority. That's all. He wanted to be something himself.

If God can receive worship, why can't I? And it says here verse 17, your heart was lifted up because of your beauty your wisdom and your position. Today you apply that your heart was lifted up because people see you are so Christ-like in your conduct you are so anointed in your ministry and you have such Bible knowledge Wow! You can even quote the Greek and the Hebrew and nobody sees it. Everybody in your church sits in awe of you the great man of God who's got such a Christ-like life who's brought up his children so well who knows the scripture so well and whose every message of his is challenging and a blessing to us and you meditate on all that Oh yeah, the devil will allow you to meditate on it he wants you to and you lift your face from the ground from the dust just a little bit in the beginning but it's just a matter of time before you are no longer washing the feet of the disciples Now, be careful dear brothers a number of times in Isaiah we find this phrase coming You know, Isaiah chapter 40 onwards is really, it's very interesting Isaiah's got 66 chapters just like I mean, that wasn't divine inspiration, the division of the chapters but I think there was something, the sovereignty of God there 66 chapters are like the 66 books of the Bible and Isaiah, the first 39 chapters are really old covenant stuff and the next 27 chapters like the 27 books of the New Testament are new covenant stuff from Isaiah 42-66 and Isaiah 40 is about John the

Baptist and that's the beginning of the new covenant and then a number of times in Isaiah in those chapters, you read this expression Isaiah 42-1 for example Behold my servant in whom my soul delights, I put my spirit upon him that's a prophetic reference to Jesus Christ but when it says behold my servant it means look carefully at my servant that's how we are to be servants look carefully at my capital S servant, we are not capital S servants we are small s but look at my capital S servant, the Lord says my soul delighted in him twice I said about him, God says this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased don't ever compare him with Moses or Elijah or anybody else this is my son, listen to him that's what they heard on the Mount of Transfiguration behold my servant and so many wonderful things, if you take all those places where that comes up you know, verse 2, Isaiah 42-2 he will not cry out or raise his voice or make his voice heard in the street that's not the way, he did not impress people with loudness and shouting and frequent hallelujahs and occasional bursting out into tongues and all that that's not how he impressed people, it's all these modern gimmicks that today's preachers have, don't ever admire any of them steer clear of them behold the first servant he will not cry out or raise his voice, there was a anointing in him, in Jesus that did not need to do anything spectacular the Holy Spirit moved in a way that people were convicted there are some wonderful things about this servant verse 3, he was very tender with the bruised reeds in his congregation, in his church, in his group there are bruised reeds in our churches and there are rebellious prodigal sons and you need to have discernment to distinguish one from the other we've got to break the prodigal sons but not the bruised reed, and if you don't know how to distinguish that, if you have one policy we must be gentle and kind to everybody, you'll never be a servant of God, Jesus knew how to deal with a 5 times divorced Samaritan woman and you read that passage in John 4 when he said to her, you've had 5 husbands and the one you're living with is not even your husband she knew it was true, she said you're a prophet that didn't puff Jesus up and don't let it puff you up if anybody calls you a prophet and then she changed the subject she said, you know your people say we must worship in Jerusalem but we say it must be in Samaria she was changing the subject from that awkward questioning about her marriage relationships and I see this wonderful spirit of Christ he did not say hey hang on, hang on, let's talk about who you're sleeping with he left it that is wisdom he would not break a bruised reed we need to know where to be silent not to embarrass a person I believe I'll see that woman in heaven I don't have any doubt about it that day itself God used her to bring the Samaritans out to meet him God's ways are not our ways he would not break a bruised reed but you know to be like that you have to be always sensitive to the Holy Spirit if you think, yeah yeah I have enough experience many a time I fall on my face before God and I say Lord 45 years ago you filled me with the Holy Spirit and you filled me again and again but I don't know the more I come closer to God the more I discover how little I know and how much of unconscious un-Christ like things there are in my flesh and I need to work out my salvation from every day it's very important for us to live before God's face like that always challenged by the example of John who walked with Jesus for 65 years filled with the Spirit the one on whose breast he leaned at the Last Supper when he sees him in Revelation 1 he falls at his feet, no question of leaning on his breast now falls at his feet like a dead man and that's where we must be all the time and then the Lord anointed him and gave him words for every single church according to the need of each church and he'll give you too the word for your church according to the need of your church which may be different from the need of some other church but you'll get it only if you're on your face before the Lord and the Lord even gave him a word for the elders of each church and gave him a vision of heaven and gave him a vision of the future he was so overwhelmed by the presence of God I was speaking the other day at the NCCF meeting how you read that John towards the end of Revelation you read he fell down and worshipped the angel he was going to do it twice first in chapter 19 and later on in chapter 21 and you and I wouldn't do that would you? You wouldn't worship any man we've got our doctrine right so right that we could even correct the mighty

apostle John John that's not what you're supposed to do don't you know it says in Colossians what Paul wrote that we're not to worship angels specifically says that and here you go doing that you can correct people's doctrines which are slightly wrong but you may not experience the overwhelming sense of God's presence that John experienced and I want to say there could be people whose doctrines are slightly wrong compared to the correct doctrines we have in our churches and yet those brothers may be so much more living in the presence of God than we who crossed our T's and dotted our I's so that we don't make any mistake in Indian doctrine beware of that.

I don't mind if I discover when I stand before the Lord that some of my understanding of minor doctrines was in error won't disturb me at all minor ones if I dwelt in the presence of God every day and was overwhelmed by that day by day seek that my dear brothers it doesn't matter if you make a little mistake like John did he fell down to worship an angel and the thing is he was so overwhelmed by the presence of God that he didn't even think what he was doing you know when Paul says I'm the chief of sinners we know that's what we should be saying but we say that because we know that's what we should be saying as humble people but Paul didn't say that oh I've got to say something humble so I will say I'm the chief of sinners, no he was so overwhelmed by the holiness of God that he spontaneously said Christ Jesus came to save sinners of whom I am chief he's writing scripture and he just wrote it that was not a calculated statement to impress anybody or to say what is right he was so convinced of the reality of it, God doesn't give us that type of revelation often and I hope you've got it at least once there have been a few occasions in my life I mean theoretically I know all the time every day I'm the chief of sinners I'm glad to say it but there have been a few occasions in my life when I've been so overwhelmed by the presence of God that I really felt in my heart I must be the greatest sinner in the whole world there cannot be anyone worse than me mercifully we don't have that too often otherwise we'd get discouraged but I hope you've experienced that at least once or twice. You know when Isaiah saw the glory of God nobody had to tell him hey listen you know what you're supposed to say? Woe is me for I am a sinner that was not a verse he found somewhere in Deuteronomy, Moses said it and so I better say it too no it was the spontaneous result of his being taken up with the presence of God I don't think Isaiah had that experience frequently maybe once maybe John also his experience of seeing Christ like that was not every day but if you have never had in our life anything of that type of overwhelming sense of the presence, now let me explain I'm not talking about some light or some of these things that Pentecostals speak about I'm not talking about all that rubbish I'm not talking about angels and light and all it's, you don't need any of that you can be fooled by light the devil comes as an angel of light so that's not what I'm talking about but a sense of God's presence that makes you put your face in the dust I find for myself one of the best times to do that is early morning or if I wake up in the middle of the night, those are some of my most precious times, alone with God, the whole world is asleep my wife is asleep it's just God and me, it's almost impossible to get a time like that at any other time even when you don't have children like in my case at home, but there all alone with God take some of those times, precious times you will not suffer if you lose an hour of sleep, I'll tell you that you'll be blessed, in the presence of God, to be overwhelmed, you can't manufacture it, no don't try to manufacture it tomorrow morning, it won't work you say Lord, it's you know the rule is this Jeremiah 29 13, one of my favorite verses you shall seek me with all your heart and you will find me and that law applies to everyone you seek the Lord with all your heart and you'll find him, you don't have to manufacture anything, you will experience what Isaiah experienced, what John experienced and it will make you a humbler and a more effective servant of God, you will have the word of the Lord in your mouth you will experience what it says in 1 Peter and chapter 4 1 Peter 4 and verse 11, whoever speaks, let him speak as if God himself is speaking, is that a greater challenge than that for your sermons, I stand in awe when I read that verse, when you stand up there or nowadays when you sit in a zoom meeting and speak and people listen to

you, it must be as though God himself is speaking, who is sufficient for these things, like the apostle says some time ago, God gave me a revelation, years ago, on what gold, silver and precious stones was to build with gold, silver and precious stones and what wood, hay and straw was, what are the three things which are gold, silver and precious stones and what are the three things which are wood, hay and straw and God gave me that revelation, actually while I was in the middle of a message, from Romans 11, the last verse, from God through God and to God are all things and the Lord showed me that is gold, silver and precious stones whatever in your life originates in God, from God is done through God's power, the power of the Holy Spirit and is done for the glory of God, from God, through God, to God that's that will be gold, silver and precious stones for all eternity in the day of judgment, the fire can never burn that up, but what is from man what originates in your bright, clever mind bright ideas, what you read in some book, what you heard some preacher you admire did, you try to imitate him from man through man, you've studied hard you've worked hard and I'm not saying we should not prepare our messages, sure a lot of people who don't prepare what they have to say end up wasting people's time wandering from subject to subject and boring people but it must be through the power of the Holy Spirit from man, through man means through my own cleverness and ultimately to man, to man means I congratulate myself at the end of it, wow that was a good message I preached, right from man, through man, to man it will be one day, however good that message was it will be wood, hay and straw burnt up for all eternity, so 1 Peter 4 we see the same thing repeated here if you look carefully from God, through God to God, whoever speaks it doesn't matter who you are, however you've been a Christian for 50 years or you've been a Christian for 2 years, you're serving God today, you're preaching the word, whoever speaks it must be from God, speak as though God himself is speaking and it must be done through God, verse 11, 1 Peter 4 11, by the strength God supplies and it must be to God, so that God may be glorified in all things, the words of Peter agree with in line with Paul's words in Romans 11 36, let me go back to another thing, we saw that expression from the beginning, it was not like this, turn with me to Genesis chapter 1 in Genesis chapter 1 we read of we're talking about from the beginning what Jesus said, from the beginning it was like this when God made man in the beginning he created man in his own image, Genesis 1 26 and 27, and he gave him authority, it says in verse 28, see what God said to Adam directly be fruitful unto Eve, Adam multiply fill the earth and rule God's given you elders authority to rule as a servant over the church rule over the fish the birds, every living thing I have given you everything something like God said to you, I appoint you as an elder in this church, something like that and the day you were appointed as an elder verse 31, it was very good, it was I hope it still is you were a humble brother that day when you were appointed as an elder you really felt you didn't deserve it it was very good, I hope it is still like that today but the secret of remaining there, in that position always, is what happens on the 7th day after you hear all these wonderful things, I've given you authority and everything is under your feet, and everything is good, not only good, very good, Genesis 1 31 then the Lord says, ok now I don't want you to go out and work for me, hang on there's a lot of work to be done in the garden in the church, but that can wait the 7th day, Genesis 2 verse 2 how was it in the beginning he completed his work and he rested, and that was Adam's first day like the very first verse of Genesis, in the beginning God four words, in the beginning God Adam was also taught in your work, in the beginning God, not the church not the ministry not the sermon you have to preach not the people you have to shepherd in the beginning God so Adam you got to spend one day with me this is the difference between law and grace in law, you work for 6 days and then you have a sabbath in grace, you begin with a sabbath on the very first day, one day you shall rest and that rest will continue in your spirit throughout the remaining 6 days as you work those who work under the law is different, they work without any rest for 6 days and struggle with bitterness and complaints and grumbling all types of things that's not the way the work in the garden can wait Adam you got to have a relationship

with me and that's what I want you to spend the next 24 hours I want to put something into your mind that should characterize you not just for these 24 hours of the seventh day but all your life live in my presence, all your work must be done from this position of a sabbath rest that's why Jesus spoke so much about this rest very important words, I think some of Jesus' most important words were in Matthew chapter 11 from the beginning it was this way Matthew 11 verse 28 come to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you I'll bring you into the sabbath rest which God wanted Adam to have that verse is quoted so much to unbelievers but Jesus spoke this to his disciples, his disciples who need to come to him and find rest and I tell you today it is elders who need to come to him and find rest because many are weary and heavy laden with so many burdens, some of them they shouldn't be carrying, so many things on their mind some are thinking how to make a little more money here and there, that's their burden some are worried about this anxiety and the other anxiety, to be concerned is ok, to be concerned about our children is ok, but to be anxious about them is not, be anxious for nothing be concerned sure, there's a need to distinguish between concern and anxiety you're not a good father if you're not concerned for your children, but you're not a good child of God if you're anxious about them, be anxious for nothing make your request known to God come to me, there is no other place where you can get that rest psychology will teach you to find rest in some technique or training your mind to think on certain things and there's so many things psychology teaches, I've often I preached a message on this once it's there on YouTube, how music money and psychology have replaced the Holy Spirit you can go to YouTube and listen to it sometime, music, money and psychology have replaced the Holy Spirit, so make sure that your rest is not a rest that comes through psychology but that comes as a result of coming to Jesus, come to me and I will give you rest it's not by some technique of training your mind to think in certain directions or any such thing it's not by physical exercise or any of this rubbish, it's by coming to Jesus and I will give you rest, all the other rest will disappear we need to keep coming to him all the time again and again and again and again and that's not all if you want this rest, he expands on it take my yoke upon you I love that, I always am encouraged by that there are two pictures that I love in my mind one is, which I often use the branch in the tree, without me you can do nothing as the branch remains in the tree and produces fruit almost effortlessly, when I look at Jesus' life I don't find him struggling to do a miracle or struggling to preach a sermon or struggling even to feed 5000 people I mean, if he tried to do it without God calling him of course he would be struggling, but when he knew he was called to do something, he wasn't struggling the only time he struggled was when he had to face hell for three hours for my sake, then he struggled because he had to break fellowship with the Father not because he was not willing to suffer hell for me he'd gladly go a million times there because he loved me so much but Father you mean my fellowship with you will be broken for three hours, and the angels come and say but Lord, it'll be restored I know it'll be restored, but I don't want my fellowship with my Father to be broken even for one second that's why he was troubled I heard that more than 40 years ago, once in prayer the Lord showed me what Jesus went through in Gethsemane and I said Lord, make me like that make me like that, I don't want to be a great preacher I don't want to be an elder I don't want to plant churches those are all secondary to me, I want a fellowship with my Father I want a fellowship with you in such a way that I don't want to break that fellowship even for one second I want that spirit you had in Gethsemane which you had all through your life isn't there any other way? he had to sweat great drops of blood and the only reason he accepted it finally, that break of fellowship was because he loved you and me no other reason so, I like that I have to stay like the branch, always dependent no branch is struggling to produce fruit nowhere in the world does a branch struggle to produce fruit, it's effortless struggle is when it's not properly connected to the tree the sap is not properly flowing, then there's a struggle and the other picture which I have in my mind is this the yoke, I mean if you've been in farms in India I don't know whether you can see it now in the United States but in India, many

places two bullocks, two oxen under a yoke ploughing together it's a beautiful picture perfectly going, ploughing the field walking together, together, together I don't think they started like that, all oxen had to be trained they don't like, horses have to be tamed oxen have to be trained and that is a very common sight in Israel that's why Jesus used that example take my yoke upon you, do you see those two oxen how they keep step and go and what a perfect furrow they've made and ploughed the field you can do that if you allow my yoke to be upon you, you're not going to do this alone no, we're doing it together but you're not the boss you can't turn when you like or slow down when you like or run ahead, no you can't, you've got to keep pace with me and you've got to go in the same direction, you've got to be sensitive every time I turn, you've got to turn with me, this is the senior ox telling the junior ox my yoke is on you, remember if I quicken my pace, you've got to quicken your pace you can't lag behind there, if I slow down you can't run ahead, you've got to keep pace with me and be sensitive to my slightest move to the left or right, this is the meaning of take my yoke upon you and learn from me, you're not the teacher don't live as if you don't have a teacher learn from me be sensitive in your conscience, oh how important it is to be sensitive in your conscience, you say can we know like that, you can know it I'll tell you, if you're sensitive to sin if you're sensitive to the smallest sin if you're willing to apologize to your wife as soon as you spoke one unkind word, not angry word one unkind word, one you apologize, I'm sorry I shouldn't have spoken like that, I tell you you'll be amazed how God begins to speak to your conscience when he sees you're so sensitive when you're willing to go to a younger brother and apologize, when you're willing to go to a younger brother to restore fellowship, when you feel he's offended you'll be amazed to see how God will reveal his will to you in his mind it's worth it, humbling yourself God gives his grace to the humble, I'm not saying you humble yourself in order to get something from God, the moment you do something for reward it's gone, you'll ruin the whole thing so don't follow what I'm saying then I can get something from God, no go to God and say Lord I don't want anything I just want to humble myself because that's the right thing to do not for any reward, I'm not trying to do bargain with God, if I humble myself will you do this for me no, no, no because it is the right thing to do learn from me for I am humble in heart how is he, he says in John chapter 5 verse 19 I don't do anything myself, I keep listening to the father and I'm prompted by him I remember reading in the biography of Hudson Taylor, that great man of God who went to China trusting God for all his needs, not only for his needs but the needs of many missionaries in China it's quite something to live so many thousands of miles away from people who are supporting you financially and to care not only for you but for all the other missionaries there amazing man and there was a lot of need for finances there and he trusted God for it I remember one story which is something like this there was a desperate need for some money in the mission you know that constant need for money in mission work and Hudson Taylor was praying Lord you know we need this by tomorrow or in a couple of days and we don't have anything right now to meet that need and just before that need had to be met an envelope arrived with a check the next day, amazing answer to prayer but the thing is there were no flights in those days that mail had been posted three months ago in England and came by ship that's the miracle there and here is Hudson Taylor praying and already three months ago got it before they call I will answer to arrive just in time to answer his prayer but Hudson Taylor says, this is what I remember him saying he says in my younger days it's as though God showed me clearly this is what you got to do yeah do this, do this but he says as I have grown older I feel I am in a fog I don't know what to do one would think that's a sign of backsliding it's a sign of maturity I found exactly the same I remember in my early days as a Christian even in the early days when I was serving God specific direction, do this from scripture, do this, do that even when I had to get married or leave the Navy to serve, clear word, do this, do that or go somewhere, when should I take my train to go back here, this date and now I don't see a word sometimes I, Lord give me a word and I open the Bible, I get nothing in the olden days I used to get it it doesn't leave

me like that now then I remember Hudson Taylor's words and the picture the Lord gave me was when a child is 2 or 3 years old, you tell him brush your teeth, change your clothes time to go to bed, take a shower every little thing when that child becomes 20 years old you tell him almost nothing he has come to know his father's mind so the mark of maturity is not specific every little thing God tells you when Jesus says the son can do nothing except what he sees the father do it's not that the father is dictating things from heaven when you are young, yes, brush your teeth change your clothes, go to bed but as you grow up, less and less and less and when you are 20 years old, your mind is so renewed Romans 12.2 that you don't hear the perfect will of God, but you prove Romans 12.2, you yourself prove it have you seen Romans 12.2 the mind is so conformed conformed to the will of God that you prove you yourself evaluate 2 or 3 courses of action and say this is it whereas when you are younger you have to hear God saying, no, go and brush your teeth now no, don't wear this shirt wear this one but not now, you look at 3 shirts and say I think I'll wear this, you haven't heard any word you prove the perfect will of God, that's a mark of maturity behold my servant this is how we are to live, dear brothers and this is how we can live in the Sabbath rest of God at all times this is very important come to me, learn from me for I am humble and gentle humility is in our relationship with God and gentleness is in our relationship with others learn from me humility and gentleness now don't try to get the dictionary meaning of either word the dictionary word of humility meaning of humility is not what Jesus is talking about is Jesus' humility the same with gentleness Jesus was the gentlest man on earth when he took a whip and chased all the sheep out and turned the tables of the money changers there was no man as gentle as he was on the earth because he was humble first the glory of God burned in him such a passion for the glory of God that he didn't care for the opinions of men he didn't whip the people, no, no, no he was gentle, he whipped the sheep don't misunderstand, he did not use the whip on any man he doesn't use it today and we must not use it either he never used the whip on a man learn from me how I am humble and how I am gentle in heart and when you do that in Matthew 11, 29, you will enter into the sabbath that Adam entered into before he could work for me that's Matthew 11, 29 you will enter into that same sabbath and live before me and then when you go out, that is the seventh day on the eighth day Adam went out into the garden to work, and then when you go out Matthew 11, 30, you will find that my yoke is very easy and doing my work is a very light burden there's nothing heavy about it, it's not a burden to serve the Lord at all, I've seen pastors and missionaries in India who served the Lord 20, 30 years, who got so many complaints against their co-workers they look such disgruntled people and feel that God's placed heavy burdens on them, I've done this and that and the other and feel God has let them down I've been serving the Lord full time for 54 years I have no complaints I'm the happiest person of all supremely happy, and I'm not trying to impress anyone it's the absolute truth Proverbs 14, 14 in the Living Bible, the godly man's life is exciting it certainly is, it has been for me you will find rest, you live in the sabbath you live in the presence of God my yoke is easy if you find the yoke is heavy, it is not the yoke of Jesus you've taken some other yoke upon you dear brothers let me speak plainly from the beginning, how was it with Adam how was it with the apostles on the day of Pentecost, do you find it difficult to work with one of your co-workers Peter and John were the biggest opposites personality wise Peter was the extrovert, quick to jump into the sea if Jesus was on the shore John was the person, hey hang on let's row the boat to the shore and meet him Peter was the one who said if everybody denies you, I'm not going to deny you John was not so sure but after the day of Pentecost, the very next thing you see is Acts 3, 1 Peter and John walking to it in the temple to pray and healing the blind man healing the lame man that's what happens when the yoke is on our neck it's easy to live and work with others turn with me to Hebrews in chapter 4 please take this word very seriously Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 9 Hebrews 4, 9 there remains a sabbath rest for the people of God have you entered into it? there remains a sabbath rest go back to the beginning, what Adam experienced before he

served the Lord the sabbath rest in which Jesus spoke about in Matthew 11, 28-30 which makes his yoke easy and his burden light that sabbath rest is for you and me how do you know whether you have entered into it? verse 10 the one who has entered this rest has seized from his own works he doesn't have any bright ideas that he can glory in he rests from his works just like God did from his on the seventh day therefore, verse 11 let us all be diligent to enter into that rest, it's not automatic because some will fall and fail because of their human strength and they need to be broken like Peter and they need the word of God verse 12 to come and divide all their soulish activity all their soulish way of serving God their soulish passion as an elder to do things for God the word of God is to come and separate all that so that you can enter into rest there are so many stimulations of the mind and the emotions, which is the soul which today Christians think are the moving of the Holy Spirit it's not only in Pentecostal charismatic circles it can be in our midst too maybe not with shoutings and hallelujahs but with clever thoughts and expressions just as much the moving of the soul as those excited stirrings among charismatics the word of God is to divide between soul and spirit when it is of the spirit you cannot take any credit for it that's for sure if you can take credit for what you've done it's pretty much certain that it's of the soul it's from man through man and through man it'll perish one day it'll be burnt up but if it is of God you cannot even touch it it's like I use the illustration of if somebody baked a cake and you happen to go around distributing it to the friends who came and somebody turns around to you and says oh brother Zach that is a fantastic cake you cooked you made or you baked you won't take the credit for it I'm just distributing what somebody else made if your work and the word you share is all from God that's exactly how you'll be the cake was baked by somebody else I'm only distributing it and it won't be a pious humble statement you make you'll be really convinced about it when you distribute that cake you know very well you didn't bake it you have no doubt in your mind about it it'll be exactly the same when you got a word from God you have absolutely no doubt in your mind that you didn't bake that there remains a rest for God's people Hebrews 4.1 let us fear let us fear the apostle doesn't say you must fear however senior an apostle he may be he includes himself let us fear lest this promise is given to us of entering his rest and some of you miss it throughout your life tragedy are you only living to go to heaven when you die no it shouldn't be like that for any of us my dear brothers I plead with you make John 17.4 your goal when you come to the end of your life to say father I have finished the work you gave me to do that's what Jesus said at the end of his life in John 17.4 father I have finished I have glorified you by finishing the work you gave me to do there's one way you can glorify God finish the work God gave you to do and forget about other things whether you finish them or not is not important Paul could say that at the end of his life even though Paul messed up 30 years of his life doing things that none of us have ever done murdering Christians and imprisoning them in spite of the fact he messed up 30 years of his life in the remaining 37 years he completed the work the father gave him to do that's our encouragement that even if we have messed up many years of our life the time comes in our life when we turn wholeheartedly to him in repentance we can still finish the work given us to do repentance is the secret never stop repenting that is my advice to you God is my witness every day of my life I repent I don't miss a single day I repent every day of my life and I will continue doing it until Christ comes again and I'll tell you why one simple reason I have not yet become completely like Jesus Christ that's why I need to repent because I have this hope in me that I will be like him one day I purify myself as he is pure which means I repent every day that's what John says in 1 John 3 verses 2 and 3 so there is a promise of entering into his rest let's not miss it in the illustration of the Israelites not entering Canaan is used here they missed it because they didn't believe that God would do it for them they trusted in their own strength the branch in the tree I cannot produce I've been in the tree for 50 years but I can't produce any fruit even today I'm as helpless today as I was the first day I bore fruit we never become so senior that we're not dependent on God like the first day in our life think of the branch and think of the yoke keep these pictures

in mind always in our meetings let me add one more word 1 Corinthians 14 all of us are involved in church meetings and we really want to do our best I believe all of you brothers I respect every single one of you I know you all and I respect every single one of you and I say that this is what we should desire in all of our meetings 1 Corinthians 14 that at the end of a meeting people should spiritually speaking verse 25 fall on their face and worship God and say hey God is here God was certainly there in our midst in today's meeting that was a wonderful sermon oh I didn't understand I never saw that interpretation in that verse don't let that excite you that's human cleverness oh that was a fresh interpretation of that verse thank you very much that's not what we glory in those are clever minds all your cleverness cannot bring the presence of God into a meeting and that's what ultimately matters not what people thought of your message brothers, throw that in the trash can did they meet with Jesus even if it was after you finished preaching somebody else shared and that's when they met with Jesus praise the Lord it wasn't through your fantastic message it was through that other brother who got up and spoke for two minutes oh wonderful I want people to meet with the Lord when they go away from the meeting we met with the Lord, the Lord was here that is the only meeting that we can say from my earliest days somehow I had a burden to build a new covenant church I mean almost from before I left the Navy when I read the New Testament I found the new church is so different from what I saw in Christendom when I was 24 years old I never experienced it for the next 10 years but it was in my heart like a baby I carried in the womb for a long time before it came to birth but you have to carry something as a burden in your heart for it to really be fulfilled it's very different when you inherit something you know people have worked hard to build up a fortune it's different from those who inherited something you inherit something you don't value it as much as your dad who worked hard to get that fortune it's the same here and my desire I said Lord what is the mark of a new covenant church and I studied the pattern that you don't have pastors you have elders and the meeting is like this different people must share not just one person all these things and the Lord said it's not these this is a pattern the tabernacle was there with the pattern and yet you read in Ezekiel the glory had departed the pattern was there every bit of that tabernacle was exactly the way it was yet even Eli's time they knew that Ichabod the glory had gone there are many churches with the correct pattern where Ichabod is written over it the glory has gone what is it? It's not the pattern of the meetings whether you have a song first or a song hymn and a message and then another song that's alright you do it whatever way you like but at the end of it people fall on their face and their heart and say I met with the Lord maybe it was a pastor who preached did they meet with the Lord? yeah I believe in pattern I believe the tabernacle must be exactly down to the last detail as God has commanded it but that's not the main thing for me the main thing is the glory if the glory has departed what's the use of glory in the fact that the boards and the curtains are all the correct shape and the correct color? Never! I never want a glory in that I want to see is the glory of God here brother? or did we follow a particular pattern a CFC pattern? Trash glory of God coveted if you seek me with all your heart you will find me that's what we should long for let me conclude with one verse in Philippians I don't have much time to talk about this Philippians chapter 1 and verse 9 Paul says the Philippians are wonderful Christians he says in verse 3 I thank God for my remembrance of you for your participation in the gospel they were the only church that sent money to Paul to support him and he says I have you in my heart and with this wonderful church he says I am praying something for you verse 9 you guys really love one another that's great but I pray that your love will abound more and more in discernment love without discernment is not very profitable it can hinder the work of God many people think love is a great thing yeah? your gas tank must be full of love but wisdom discernment must be in the driver's seat very important let wisdom and discernment drive the car a car where the gas tank is full of love you can be full of love but if you don't have wisdom and discernment you will still hinder the work of God in your life and in your home and in your church I pray that your love will

grow in real knowledge of God and all discernment

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