

God's Word is a Torchlight That Shows You the Next Step

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of obedience to God's word, using the analogy of a torchlight guiding our path. It highlights the need to obey the light we have received, even if it challenges our human reasoning, and shares personal testimonies of obedience leading to spiritual growth and anointing. The sermon also stresses the significance of forgiveness, gentleness, humility, and diligent parenting in reflecting Christ-like character and avoiding spiritual stagnation.

Scripture: Psalms 119:105, Proverbs 3:5, Luke 19:8, Acts 24:15, Matthew 11:29, Ephesians 6:4

Topics: "Obedience to God's Word", "Christ-like Character"

Description

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Transcript

Well, let's just pray before we begin. Heavenly Father, you have given us your word, your lamp to our feet and the light to our path. Please guide us with that, that everyone here will receive something from you.

We pray in Jesus' name, Amen. There are two things as we just, the verse I just quoted in prayer from Psalm 119. I just want to show you that before we go into the message.

Psalm 119 in verse 105. This is a well-known verse to most people, your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Or in today's terms, we would say, your word is like a torchlight in the darkness.

Now, the thing about a torchlight is it'll show you dangers in the way, but you can see further ahead only as you move forward. It's not like a streetlight that lights up the whole road in front of you. God's word is not like a streetlight that lights up the whole of your life in front of you.

It's a torchlight, which means you can see further only as you yourself move forward, obeying the light you have. So that's what this, your word is like a torch to my life and a light to my path. So this is the reason why many people don't really understand God's word, because they haven't obeyed the light they already

have.

If God's given me light on something and I don't obey it, he's not going to lead us further forward. I remember, just to give you a little personal testimony, when I was converted 63 years ago in 1959, July, I had come from a church background, which did not believe in water baptism. My father was a believer, but he belonged to that church.

And so when I was a baby, they sprinkled me in that church and gave me a name. They called it christening or infant baptism. So when I got converted, there were people around me who said, now you've got to get baptized.

But my friends in the old church said, listen, that church you go to is all born again people, but this Orthodox church, which you belong to, people are not born again. So if you take water baptism, they'll throw you out of this church, and then you won't be able to witness to them. So I was young, I was only 20 years old, and it sounded like a good argument to me that this dead church that I belong to, which sprinkled me as a baby, did have a whole lot of people who are not born again.

And if I take immersion baptism, they'll throw me out, and then I won't be able to witness to them. It sounded like a good argument for me. And so I didn't get baptized.

I would read the Bible and go to this. I was going to a brethren assembly which believed in water baptism, but I didn't take baptism. Month after month, the whole year went by, I was studying the scriptures, I was keeping my conscience clear, until about one and a half years went by in my life.

And one day when I was kneeling in prayer, I felt the Lord say to me, you are not listening to me, why should I listen to you? Because by that time I had already studied the Bible, the New Testament, and discovered that there is no infant baptism in the Bible. That is an invention of man. They were trying to imitate the circumcision that the children are circumcised under the Jewish system.

So the babies must be baptized in the Christian system. But I discovered that in the New Testament, no baby was baptized, only adults, those who believe. Jesus said, you believe and be baptized.

So when I heard the Lord saying to me that he was not going to listen to me because I was not listening to him, I decided that I'm not going to care about whether which church throws me out. I don't care about that. I want to obey God.

That is a very important decision I made in my life, that I would not allow my human reason. Human reason is what these people quoted to me, you know, that you won't be able to witness to these people if they throw you out of this church. So you better not obey what you think is right.

Very often, if we use our human reason, we find many things in scripture which we don't obey. There's a verse in that connection I'd like to point out to you in Proverbs in chapter three, because many people, when they come to scripture, tend to use their reason. It's good to use our mind to understand scripture, but if I use my human reason, I may disobey scripture.

Proverbs three and verse five, trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own reason, on your own understanding. These two things are put in opposition to each other. I don't know whether you realize that human reason opposes the word of God.

Because there are all types of questions people ask, what does it matter whether you get immersed in a baptism tank or in a river, the important thing is your life in Christ, isn't that important? Baptism looks like a simple ritual, and I believe that God has allowed it to be like that to test us, to see whether we will obey something or whether we will lean upon our reason and say, what am I going to get by being immersed in a baptism tank? I go out and come out and I'm just the same person, it's the heart that matters. That's why it says here, trust in the Lord with all your heart and don't lean on your reason. If you acknowledge him, verse six, in all your ways, in every single step, if you say that God's word alone will be my guide and not my reason, he will make your paths absolutely straight.

So even though I wasted one and a half years that way, right at the beginning, I wish I had obeyed immediately, but I learned something that time, which helped me throughout my life, and that is that when I see something in God's word, whether my reason understands it or not, if I accept it and believe it and obey it, God will make my paths clear for me to walk. He will show me his will for my life at every step. That's a simple principle which I want to share with all of you, that if there is something God has spoken to you from his word, if you don't obey it, if you allow your human reason to clash with that, don't expect God to guide you further.

And the result will be that your life will stagnate. When I look at many, many believers whom I know, I find that their life is stagnated at some point. By the time they've been believers for 10 years, let's say, they should have become mature.

They should be able to guide others and lead others. And the reason for so much stagnation among most believers that I have met in many churches is because they do not take God's word seriously. They go by their own reason.

They satisfy themselves that I'm going to a church and I'm attending the meetings and everything is okay. It's very, very important, dear brothers, that every one of you study God's word carefully. God's word is a lamp to our feet, a torchlight.

And if you're not making progress in your life, if there are some sins in your life that you are again and again and again being defeated by, then ask yourself this question. Is there something God has already shown you in his word? The torchlight has shown the next step for you in front of you, but you're not taking it. And because you're not taking it, you don't see anything further.

And if you remain there all your life, you'll be at that point. There are many believers like that. And it's amazing how God began to show me step after step after step.

Once I had taken the first one. So once I took water baptism, then the Lord began to show me something else in my life. He said, you have to set right the things in your past where you did something wrong, where you cheated somebody or hurt someone.

And that is, you know, from the story of Zacchaeus in Luke chapter 19. I was reading Luke 19 and there I saw Zacchaeus was a tax collector who had cheated numerous people in his past life. They had a reputation for being crooked to such an extent that the people in Israel called the tax collectors the worst sinners.

And this man wanted to turn and Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit to him. He was sitting on a tree and the Lord asked him to come down, Luke 19. And notice what it says here that all the Jews were Luke 19, all

the Jews grumbled and said Jesus is going to be the guest of a man who's a sinner.

But this is the word I want you to see that came to my heart at that time. They were going to Zacchaeus' house. Jesus had told him in verse five, I want to stay in your house today.

Jesus was going to stay in Zacchaeus' house that night. And when they came to the gate of the house, it says here in verse eight, Zacchaeus stopped. Now that's an unusual word because I've never seen it anywhere else that is written about somebody that is going together and suddenly one person stops.

Why did Zacchaeus stop? See here, it says here immediately, the Lord said, he told the Lord, Lord, let me paraphrase it. He was a crooked tax collector and this big house that he was living in must have been bought with a lot of cheated money that he had cheated from others. So he felt guilty in writing the Lord into this house, which had been built with unrighteous money.

A lot of houses today being built with unrighteous money. People have cheated, cheated the government or cheated others and made a little fortune and they build houses with it and even Christians. And they think, well, Lord, my past is all blotted out in the blood of Christ.

Yes, but if there are things that you have to set right, they have to be set right too. So Zacchaeus understood it immediately. How did someone speak to him about it? No.

It's one of the wonderful things we see in the Christian life. He didn't have a Bible. He didn't have a preacher to tell him that you must make restitution like I'm saying right now.

When you really come into the presence of the Lord, you get light on your life. It's like the flashlight, torchlight, a bright burning light shines into your past life and you begin to see all types of things about your past life that you never saw before. And Zacchaeus suddenly got light on the fact that he had cheated so many people.

And so he said, Lord, I'm going to give back, verse 8, last part, four times what I stole from anybody. See, Zacchaeus was being righteous. I stole something from people years ago and they lost a lot of bank interest or money they could have invested somewhere and made some profit from it.

I've cheated them of it. So I want not just to return the money I took. I want to return it with interest and more than interest because I deprived them of money they could have used usefully somewhere, four times.

I've almost never heard of anybody who cheated another and who's convicted that he should return four times. They don't even often return it with the interest. And then he said, now I want to paraphrase his words, Lord, I've done this all for many, many years in the past and I don't know where these people live today.

How can I return it? But I'm not going to make that an excuse to keep the money with me. Now, a whole lot of people I cheated. I know that.

I've got the accounts, but I don't know where these people live now. The ones I know I can go and return them four times, but the others I don't know. I don't know where they live, but I'm not going to conveniently forget about it.

I've calculated it. And what I'm going to do is I'm going to take that money and give it to the poor. I cannot keep it in my bank account because it is unrighteous.

I cannot use it. Many people would, as I say, say, well, I don't know where they are, so I can't give it. But Zacchaeus was righteous.

He said, I cannot use money which has not been righteously earned by me. I'm going to give it back. And I'm sure it would take him a few years to go and find all those people and to give all this money back or anyway, a number of months.

When did he get saved? See what Jesus said. These are very significant words because this is the only time that Jesus ever said these words to anybody. The only time that Jesus ever said these words to anybody.

And what does that in verse nine, today, salvation has come to this house because he also is a son of Abraham. You remember the story of Abraham when his nephew Lot, you can read about it in Genesis 14 sometime, his nephew Lot was captured by some enemies and Abraham took all his 318 servants and went and fought against those enemies and delivered Lot and collected all the money. You know that these people had attacked Sodom where Lot was living and taken all that money and all the loot Abraham recovered.

Now the law in battle those days was that if you defeat the enemy, the loot is yours. You don't give it to anybody else. And the king of Sodom knew that.

So he said, Abraham, you can keep the money because you fought the battle and won it all. And Abraham said, no, I won't even take a shoelace from you. Otherwise you will say that you made me rich.

I'm going to be rich because God has blessed me. And when God makes me rich, I don't want it to be said that I kept the loot of Sodom, which I won in battle, which I have a right to, but I won't take it. His attitude to money, that's why the Lord said about Zacchaeus, a true son of Abraham, one who wants to be righteous in money matters.

So after I took baptism, this is the next thing the Lord showed me. You have to make restitution, give back what you took wrongfully. Now, it's very interesting that in the previous one and a half years, the Lord never told me that.

Why was that? I mean, this was something I had cheated the government of much earlier, before I got converted. When I was in the Navy, our ships would go to different ports and we'd buy things there and bring it home and no Naval officer ever paid any custom duty on it, neither did I. But the righteous thing was to pay customs duty on those expensive items. And so I sat down and I calculated how much customs duty I would have cheated the Indian government of.

This is way back in 1961, I'm talking about, after I took baptism. And it came to a huge amount of money. It came to about four times my monthly salary.

I was getting a pretty good salary as a Naval officer. It came to four times that, and I had to take a number of months to save that money. And one day I saved it and I gave it back to the government.

My bank account was empty. My heart was full of the joy of the Lord. Salvation had come to me as well.

So it's very easy sometimes to say, well, the blood of Christ has cleansed me, all the past is blotted out. That's right. But if I have wronged anybody, if I've cheated anyone, it must be given back.

The torchlight showed me one step at a time. Then once I've done this, the Lord showed me some very, very small thing, something that happened, I think 10 years earlier, where I'd been playing some game with one of my cousins and I was playing something and I cheated him of a stamp. We used to collect stamps, worthless stamps, but while he was not looking, I stole a stamp.

I said, Lord, he's stopped collecting stamps, I've stopped collecting stamps, this is worthless. It has no value. The Lord said, no, you did something wrong.

It may have no value, but you must write a letter of apology. And I tell you, that was more difficult for me than to give back the money, because this required humility to ask an unconverted cousin of mine forgiveness for something he'd laughed at. He said, what are you talking about? It's a ridiculous little thing you are apologizing for.

But the Lord said, you must write that letter. And I wrote that letter and saying, 10 years ago, I stole this worthless stamp from you, please forgive me. I tell you, later on, the Lord told me that if I had not set those two things right, 60 years ago, I would have been dragging a chain on my feet, all my Christian life.

And I would not have made the progress that I made in my life thereafter. And I'll tell you something that happened in my life after that, suddenly, it's as if my Christian life began to move forward like a rocket. Thereafter, when I read the Bible, I got revelation from it.

And God anointed me with the Holy Spirit and gave me boldness to witness about him. I didn't have that boldness before, to witness about him on the streets and in buses and trains, and I could boldly witness for him to my fellow passengers, and whether they made fun of me or not, didn't make a difference. You can't do it.

It doesn't come naturally. I was basically a shy person, but when I got filled with the Holy Spirit, everything changed. And in a couple of years after this, after my baptism, just about two years after, the Lord opened doors for me to preach, and I was preaching in conferences for 5,000 people with the anointing of the Spirit.

And it went on from there, and then about a year after that, the Lord told me to leave my naval service and come out for Christian work. And like that, step-by-step, I could show you many, many things. But what I want to point out is that I would not have seen the next step if I had not taken the previous one.

The word is a lamp, a torchlight. So if I stand with a torchlight at one particular place, that's all I'll see. I have to take the step God shows me before I see the next one.

So I want to ask all of you, I don't know at what stage of development you are in your Christian life, but ask yourself this question. Is there anything God has shown you, either in your past life that needs to be set right, some money that has to be returned, even if it was years ago that you cheated? It doesn't matter if you cheated somebody 50 years ago. If you remember it, you've got to return it.

And if you don't know where the person is, put it in the offering box. And I know one brother who heard this message and put, I think, \$100,000 into the offering box. And I know God blessed him.

Nobody knew about it. He only told me about it, that he had done it. I praise God for such people who have been faithful in these little things.

They may look like ordinary believers when you see them in church. But when Christ comes again, you'll see the glory that shines through them will be way different from those who have compromised in the little things. So please take this very, very seriously.

Let me show you another verse in Acts of the Apostles, in chapter 24. We all know that there's going to be a resurrection one day when Christ comes again. Actually, what people don't know is there'll be two resurrections, not one.

There'll first be a resurrection of all the born-again righteous people, and then later on a resurrection of all the others. And that's what he says in Acts 24, verse 15. I have this hope in God, which these Jewish men also cherish.

There will certainly be two resurrections, a resurrection of the righteous and a resurrection of the wicked. The righteous will enter with the Lord into eternal glory in heaven, and the wicked will go into the flame of lake of fire. And now Paul says, this is Paul's testimony.

Let me read verse 16. Since there are going to be two resurrections, resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked, and I want to be in the resurrection of the righteous, there's something I do in order to be in that resurrection. I do my very best to keep my conscience blameless, always, 24 hours a day, before God and before men.

That's a very important verse, and that's one of the verses the Lord gave me at that time. Follow this all your life. You don't need to know so many scriptures.

Keep your conscience clear before God and before men immediately. You see, that's what I've done in returning this money and writing this letter of apology, and the Lord was telling me to keep my conscience constantly clear. Thoughts come into our mind.

Thoughts are not sin. Let me tell you something. Do you know that Jesus had a thought in his mind, jump off the roof of the temple and kill yourself? Was that a sin? No, it was temptation.

He rejected it. Another thought came into his mind, turn the stones into bread. He rejected it.

He said, I'm not going to eat until the Father tells me to. So when a thought comes into your mind, Jesus also had a thought to worship Satan. He rejected it.

See, Satan puts thoughts into our mind. That's a temptation. Don't condemn yourself because a thought came into your mind, a bad thought, an evil thought, a lustful thought.

What did you do with it? Reject it and you're not sinned. But if you entertained it and relished it, even for a few moments, then you have sinned in your thoughts. So I say this because some people think, oh, that thought came into my mind.

Maybe a bad thought about somebody else. Okay. Temptation.

What do you do about it? Reject it. Or some bitterness against somebody who has harmed you. The thought comes, a bitter thought against somebody who has treated you very badly.

That's only temptation. Reject it and say, Lord, I do not, I will not be bitter against that person. I will forgive that person.

And I say before you, I have forgiven that person. This is another thing that the Lord began to show me. You know, as you move forward, the torchlight gives you more and more light along the path.

And I understood how, what it means to be clear in my mind, to have a clear conscience that when a thought comes into my mind, it's only a temptation. And if I reject it, I don't sin. And that's from James chapter one.

I'm trying to show you the step-by-step how the Lord leads, led me and I'm, and the Lord seeks to lead you that way too. In James chapter one, committing sin is compared to the birth of a baby. The Bible uses illustrations to help us understand.

It says here that, you know, lust is the temptation to sin within us. James chapter one and verse 15, when the desire, the wrong desire, verse 15, when it conceives, then it gives birth to sin. And then that leads you on to spiritual death.

But if the lust does not conceive, there is no sin. Do you understand that? That's exactly what I just said just now. Let me use an illustration.

Supposing there's a very pure girl walking down the road and a very handsome young man tries to attract her. Say, come to my house, come with me. And she sees him, he's a very handsome young man, he's very rich.

And she's really drawn to, tempted to go with him. But she says, no. Did she sin? No.

Was she attracted to that man? Yes. But did she sin? No. Was there any conception? No.

Think of that, think of that in relation to temptation and sin. Some thought has flashed into your mind. Maybe you're attracted to it.

Maybe some way of making money, which is not very righteous. Or something you want to say, something rudely to somebody who has hurt you badly, a temptation. It comes to your mind, you think about it and you say, no, I'm not going to do it.

No conception. You rejected it in your mind itself. There was no sin.

It's, you know how conception takes place that, that woman has, that girl has to unite with that man. It's only when you unite with that temptation that sin comes. So I say this to deliver you from unnecessary condemnation over temptation, distinguish between temptation and sin.

It's when your mind agrees with it. When you say, I'll never forgive that person, then you've sinned. The temptation came to you to be bitter with that person who hurt you so badly or hurt your family members so badly, or did something wrong to you.

And you feel like having a bitterness against him and you say, no, I won't do it. Or you feel like spreading a scandal about him. Really tempted to spread.

I must tell other people about the evil this man did to me. And you say, no, I won't do it. You haven't sinned.

But did this temptation come to you strongly? Yes. Did this, did this young girl going down the street feel strongly attracted to that man? Yes. But she did not give in to that temptation.

She said no. So please keep this in mind that a strong temptation comes to you does not mean you're sinned. If you reject it in your mind, you're not sinned.

And this is particularly so in case of where we, you know, we deal with so many people in our daily life. And as long as you deal with people, there'll always be somebody who hurts you or misunderstands you or spread stories about you. We all face that.

And people let you down in your place of work. Maybe your boss cheats you or so many things can happen. And all types of thoughts can come in your mind of revenge and trying to pull him down in some way.

And you feel strongly about it. You have not sinned. You say, no, I will not do it.

And people ask me when, when somebody has hurt me, let's say they asked me, I have forgiven him, but the memory of it keeps coming back to my mind of what he did to me. I said, God does not take away the memory of what we have suffered in the past. If you were to go to Jesus after his resurrection and ask them, do you remember that these people spat on you and called you bad names and killed you a few days ago? You say, oh yeah, I remember it very well, but I have forgiven them and I pray father forgive them.

Even today, 2000 years later, Jesus remembers all the evil that people did to him. So what if you remember all that, do you think the Lord in heaven has forgotten all the evil people did to him or that he was crucified, but he's forgiven them. That is the clearest example, which proves to me that in our memory, we may never forget the evil that people did to us years and years later, but forgiveness must be total.

That means when you look at that person, supposing you see that person on the street, you must be able to be cheerful towards him because you have nothing against him. I think stop for a moment now and think about somebody who has harmed you, perhaps more than one person. I want all of you to just stop for a moment right now and think of somebody you remember who harmed you or hurt you in some way.

Even your young children, anybody who's older than five years old will remember somebody or the others harmed them in some way. What is your attitude towards that person today? Maybe you want to avoid him naturally if he's a troublesome fighting type of person, you must avoid such people, but have you forgiven him? Have you forgiven her? See, how to know that? Just this much. Tell the Lord, Lord, in your presence, I say, I have forgiven X and I have forgiven Y and I have forgiven Z. I've forgiven this person, that person, you said that before the Lord, Lord, I mean it.

I'm nothing against that person. I wish him the best. 10 years later, the memory will still be in your mind, but you haven't sinned because you've forgiven him.

It will make a tremendous difference in your life if you can say that you have forgiven every single human being that you can remember who's ever hurt you in any way. Do it, brother. Do it today.

You'll find the torchlight shows you the next step in the path. God's word is like a torchlight to our path and I think of so many Christians I've met even in our CFC churches who don't seem to grow spiritually. Yeah, they're good people, but 10 years later, they're in the same position spiritually.

I don't see a spiritual development in them. That's like a child getting 100% in mathematics and you say, great, you got 100% in mathematics. Great.

You see him 10 years later, how much are you getting in mathematics now? He says, 100% still. Which class are you in? You must have come into the 10th grade by now. No, I'm still in the kindergarten.

What's the glory in getting 100% in kindergarten for 10 years continuously? You should get 100% the next year and the next year and the next year. There must be a progress. So we're not supposed to be in the same level spiritually.

We have come to December now, one full year is over and God has arranged for the earth to go around the sun in 12 months, 365 and a quarter days. And at least once in a year, it's good for us to have a checkup. Like our children, once a year they get promoted to the next class.

We don't want any of our children sitting in the same class every year. And just like every parent is eager to see if the child's got a promotion to go to the next class. I believe when you come to December every year, it's good for you to ask yourself, where are you spiritually compared to where you were a year ago? Have you become more patient and gentle in your home with the other members in your home? Especially husband-wife relationship.

You know that Jesus told us, never told us to learn how to preach from him, never. He never said, preach like I preach, none of us can do it. But he did tell us to learn one, two things from him.

You know what are the two things Jesus told us to learn from him? Not how to preach, not how to pray, not how to heal the sick, not how to do miracles. No, none of these things. Turn with me to Matthew 11 and verse 29.

He said, learn from me these two things. I want to ask you, how many of you are eager to learn these two things that Jesus specifically told us? I mean, there are hundreds of things we can learn from the life of Christ. I look at the fact that he was obedient to his parents, earthly parents, when he was a little boy, and how he submitted to authority, how he loved his disciples until the end.

So many things we can learn. But Jesus particularly said, learn two things from me, Matthew 11, 29. Learn from me, take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble.

Not externally first, but in my heart first. Here are two things that we have not tried to learn in our past Christian life, at least from now on. To learn to be a little more gentle in our speech, gentle in the way you communicate something.

Maybe somebody did something wrong. Maybe your wife or husband let you down. Okay.

Be gentle in saying it. Maybe they messed up something. Maybe your children did something wrong, messed up something.

Be gentle. Do children need correction? Yes. Use the rod if necessary, but be gentle and humble.

Humble means I go before the Lord and say, Lord, I am capable of the same sin this person committed. There's no room for a husband and wife to live in tension. If each says, well, he lost his temper or she lost her temper, but Lord, I'm capable of that myself.

Please forgive her and forgive me. Help us to live mercifully with each other. Gentleness and humility.

Learn from me in a lot of areas, because basically our human nature is hard and proud. We don't realize it. Many people can see pride in our conduct.

We don't see it ourselves. It's like bad breath, you know? Bad breath is something you never smell yourself, but everybody you talk to will smell it, but they won't tell you. There are some people who when they speak, their spit comes out of their mouth the way they speak.

I've experienced that. People spit falling on my face. I don't tell him to his face, this is what he did.

But what I'm saying is we are unconsciously hurting others and we don't even know it. Ask the Lord to give you light. Lord, show me where I'm not gentle towards the people I deal with in my home or in the office.

Let me learn from you. Gentleness and humility. Even without children.

I've often told parents, when you correct your children, ask yourself how you do it. Maybe you warned them to do something, told them to do something in a certain way, and they did not do it that way, and so they messed up something in your house. And they come to you and say, Dad, I'm sorry I messed up.

What do you say? You say, I told you so. Never let those words come out of your mouth. Never say to your wife or husband, I told you it would happen like this.

No, that's the voice of the expert. We're not experts. Say to your child, never mind, son.

Never mind, my girl. Let's fix it. You and I will fix it, whatever the problem is.

Something your wife messed up at home, something your husband messed up, say, never mind, darling. Let's fix it. Your home will become like heaven in a little while.

Do you want that? Jesus said, learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart. God will show you one step after another as you move forward. There are many things he has to show us.

And coming to children, yeah, we must love our children and correct them. But at the same time, it's very important that our children don't bring a bad name to the Lord because we are not faithful in observing them and correcting them. Because particularly in this day, generation, children are rebellious.

There's a spirit in the world where children are disrespectful to older people. I've seen that. I've seen it particularly in the United States, in the villages in India, in non-Christian families, they're taught to respect their parents.

But I find that sort of gone in today's generation. And it's very important that in our churches, our children are a good testimony. How are your children behaving? Other people who see their bad behavior may not come and tell you.

They may feel awkward to come and tell you. I used to tell everybody in our church, I said when my children were small, if any of you see any of my children misbehaving in any way, please come and tell

me. That will be a kindness that you're doing to them because I want my children to grow up godly, every one of them.

And I was strict about that. I was very strict with my children. We must be strict, brothers and sisters, loving and kind, loving and kind, but strict.

I've seen in some churches, after the meetings are over, yeah, children run around and play, but sometimes they behave in a very bad way, even the girls, and small girls. And the parents are blissfully ignorant of what is happening and the way their children are behaving. We must keep a watch on our children, on how they are behaving, otherwise you will get a bad name as a Christian.

I say that in every church I go to, please watch your children. You know, I've heard some parents tell me back in India, brother, all children are not all the same. Some have got a different personality and temperament, and that's why they turn out like that so hard and naughty and mischievous, and they fight with others.

But what I tell them is, how is it I observed that some families, I'm talking about the churches, I've seen in many, many places, and I saw that even in India in our home church, some families, every one of their children is well-behaved, how is that? The children are all different. And some other families, all the children are naughty, how is that? So I came to the conclusion after many, many years of observation, that it's not the children are different, I say the parents are different. Some parents are very strict and are concerned that the name of Jesus should not be dishonored by the way my children behave anywhere, and particularly in church.

And there are others, they're not bothered, they are fellowshiping with all the grown-ups and completely ignorant of how their children are behaving. I saw this through many years, and I took warning for myself. I said, Lord, I don't want to be guilty of that.

I don't want it to be said that the other Zach preachers are there in the front, but we see how his children behave out here afterwards. Be very, very careful, even if you're not preaching, be very careful that you don't bring a bad name on the Lord, forget the bad name on yourself, on the Lord. Remember, Satan is the accuser of the brother.

God is there to help us, so we must never make an excuse for sin. We must never make an excuse if our children behave badly. Don't cover up for them and say, oh, but he was a bit unwell today.

And say to someone who corrects, you say, thank you, brother. I'm very thankful that you told me, yeah, I need to work out my salvation as a father. Take the blame yourself.

Don't blame your child. The Bible says in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 4, fathers, you have to bring up your children in the discipline of the Lord. That's another part of the path, the torchlight shines.

When you get married and you have children, there's one more step and the torchlight shows you the next part. And in the world in which we are living right now, it's not at all easy to bring up children. I'll tell you that.

But you have to be much more careful with your children than I was with mine 45 years ago, because the world has developed an evil. So I urge you, dear brothers, allow the Lord to show you the immediate part in front of you and God's words like a torchlight and say, Lord, please help me. Help me to take this step

and then show me the next one.

And step by step, I want to become more and more like Christ as each year goes by. I want to be an example as a parent. I want to be an example as a brother in the church, as a sister in the church.

Please help me. Give me the power of your Holy Spirit. Do you think the Lord will deny you when he sees such a hunger in your heart to be a good testimony for him? He will fill you with his Holy Spirit.

Believe me. Let's pray. So while our heads are bowed in prayer, I want to encourage you to think of at least one thing that God spoke to you today.

If you can think of more than one, well and good, but at least one thing and say, Lord, please help me to deal with that. The torchlight has shown me one step. I want to take it wholeheartedly.

And I believe you'll show me the next step after that. Heavenly Father, please help us to walk in the light you give us. We pray in Jesus name.

Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/ayi65ZKX8yc.mp4>

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