

Growth to Maturity (Tamil)

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of spiritual growth and discipleship through self-examination and acquiring the mind of Christ.

Duration: 1:01:09

Scripture: Psalm 16:11, Jeremiah 29:13, Matthew 4:4, Matthew 15:32, Mark 4:19, Romans 8:29, Romans 14:17, Hebrews 1:9, Hebrews 5:12, Hebrews 11:25

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Christian Maturity"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking the kingdom of God first, which is characterized by righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. It challenges believers to grow spiritually, not remaining as spiritual babies but progressing towards maturity by developing the mind of Christ, which involves loving righteousness and hating sin. The speaker highlights the need for continuous obedience to God's word, leading to spiritual growth, joy, and peace in the believer's life.

Transcript

I praise the Lord for another opportunity to come together for a conference like this. We must never be excited when more people join our church. There is a human habit to be happy when more people come.

But sometimes in a church of 200 people, God may count only 10 disciples of Jesus. We may say there are 200 people in our church, but the Lord says there are only 10, because He told us to go and make disciples in every nation. So anyone in any of our churches who is not a disciple is not counted.

So we don't have to judge other people, but all of us must judge ourselves. One very important question, am I a disciple of Jesus Christ? Even an elder brother must ask that question, because a person can be a disciple of Jesus and become an elder, and then backslide and not be a disciple of Jesus. And if you as an elder brother are not learning and following Jesus more and more, you won't be able to lead other people to learn and follow after Jesus.

The Bible pictures the Christian life like a race and a war, and we are told to run the race looking unto Jesus. We are told to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Both of these things, war and races, are things for which we need a lot of devotion and practice and discipline.

So the Christian life is never pictured like a picnic or a holiday. From beginning till end it is a race, and from beginning till end it is a war. So we mustn't relax at any time.

We have to be alert and fighting all the time. Jesus often said, watch and pray, in other words, be alert and pray. A lot of people talk about prayer, but they don't talk about being alert.

If we are not alert and watch, then we are not going to be able to progress in the Christian life. So our subject during this conference is what's written there, the mind of Christ. Our aim in the Christian life on earth is to acquire the mind of Christ more and more as we grow.

You can say that you have grown in the last one year if your mind is more like the mind of Christ today than it was last year. To have the mind of Christ does not mean increase in knowledge of the Bible. It means thinking the way Jesus would have thought about everything in the world, about all the people we meet and all the circumstances that come into our life.

If I have the mind of Christ, I will react to the situations the way Jesus would have reacted. I will deal with people the way Jesus would deal with people. And it all depends on having the mind of Christ.

Even in the first century, one of the great tragedies was that people were not growing spiritually. Let's turn to a verse in Hebrews chapter 5. In Hebrews 5, the person who wrote the letter, we don't know who it is, but this is what he says. It's amazing that one of the most wonderful books in the whole Bible, the book of Hebrews, there is no author mentioned.

The book of Hebrews reveals certain truths about Jesus Christ that are not revealed in any of the other 65 books of the Bible. It's in Hebrews that we read that Jesus was tempted in all points as we are and did not sin. It's in Hebrews that we read that Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith.

And that it is possible for us to run the same race that Jesus ran on the earth. It's in Hebrews that we are told that we have to hold on to our confidence firm until the end. So, in Hebrews 5, it says in verse 11, concerning Christ we have much to say but it's very hard to explain because you have become dull of hearing.

There are many things about Jesus which the author wanted to share but he says you can't understand it. Now, when a child is in the kindergarten, there are many things about mathematics and science you cannot explain to that child. But by the time that child is 16 or 17 years old, he should be able to understand that.

But just like in our country, there are many 17 year olds who are not educated because they have never gone to school or they went to school and dropped out after 1 or 2 years. So, also it's possible to be in the church 16 or 17 years and not grow spiritually. That means we become dull of spiritual hearing.

And he says further, how do we become dull of hearing? I'll tell you the easiest way to become spiritually deaf. When God says something to you and you don't take it seriously to obey it, you become deaf. When I got converted 50 years ago, I had been baptized as a child when I was a little baby.

And I knew there are different believers who say that child baptism is good enough. No, you must be baptized as a believer. Some others say that child baptism is okay.

I didn't know the Bible, so I didn't know which of these two believers to believe. So, I read the Bible. I found in the Bible there is only one type of baptism, that is after you are born again.

Then I thought, well, if I get baptized, my church will throw me out. But I need to be there to witness to them about salvation. So, for one and a half years, I didn't obey the Lord in baptism.

And for one and a half years, I didn't grow spiritually. I became deaf. Because God had said something to me and I was not obeying.

Is there anything in your life that God told you to do, but you have not obeyed? But as soon as I obeyed God in baptism, I began to grow. And then God told me another thing. He told me to return money that I had cheated from the government.

Then I gave it back. Then God showed me something else. Then I did that.

Then He showed me something else. And for all these last more than 48 years, God has been showing me more and more and more. So, at any point, now God tells me something today and I don't do it.

I will become a little deaf. That's how you become dull of hearing. I see so many believers in our churches who are not growing spiritually.

And I know it's because they have become dull of hearing. Their external testimony is good. Everybody in the church thinks you are a good brother or sister.

Maybe everybody in the church thinks you are a good elder brother. Maybe you can fool me also and I also think you are a good elder brother. But my opinion of you is not important.

Is there something God has spoken to you which you have not obeyed? Something in your heart. Maybe even your wife does not know what God spoke to you. Or your husband does not know.

But you know that God said something to you and you have to obey it. Maybe there is a sinful habit in your life which you are not taking seriously to get rid of. Maybe you have not realized how serious that one sinful habit is for which Jesus hung on the cross.

When you take any sin in your life lightly, you have to see it like nailing Jesus to the cross. When you see it like that, you say, Oh Lord forgive me. How many of you would join the Roman soldiers and nail Jesus to the cross? If you treat one sin in your life lightly, that is what you are doing.

For example, if you have anger in your life. I had a lot of anger in my life. But for so many years, I never knew the seriousness of anger.

I never knew that anger is nailing Jesus to the cross. No, if you are battling it, you are okay. Then you are not nailing Jesus to the cross.

Maybe you fall, but you get up and you repent and say, Lord help me. I am not talking about such people. They are alright.

They will one day get victory. I am talking about those people who can get angry and not even be convicted about it. You can yell at your neighbor or your wife and not feel convicted about it.

Or at a younger brother in the church. Or at a beggar. And you don't feel convicted about it.

Then it is serious. It is like cancer in your system. That will kill you.

You will be deaf. You won't hear God's voice. You will hear my voice in the meeting, but you won't hear God's voice.

It is more important to hear God's voice than my voice. My voice will not help you to grow spiritually. Remember the first words that Jesus spoke in his ministry.

Matthew 4. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. The words that proceed from the mouth of God.

Jesus compared it to our daily food. Jesus did not say that daily food is not necessary. What did he say in that verse? Man shall not live by food alone.

He said that means you need your daily food, but you need something more than that. The word that comes from God's mouth which makes you live. As we listen to these words that come from God's mouth and we obey it, our mind gets more and more renewed to become like the mind of Jesus Christ.

That should be happening in your life. If it is not happening, I want to invite all of you to repent. If it is not happening, I want to invite all of you to repent.

Can your wife say that you have become more like Jesus Christ in your life? Because your wife is seeing you every day. Can your husband say that you are becoming more Christ like and gracious in your speech? Because he sees you every day. What about the people at work? Your colleagues at work.

Do they see you as more Christ like in your speech? And more Christ like in your humility and behavior? What about your children? Do they see you as more Christ like at home? What about the servant who works in your home? Does she see you as more Christ like in your behavior? Does she see you as more Christ like in your behavior? Do the people around you see that you are quick to apologize when you spoke a bad word? Or you spoke a hurtful word? Or do you apologize as soon as you spoke a hurtful word? Or when you get more money, do you bow down as Jesus did? Or do you say that I am a smart man and I am earning so much money? There are so many ways of making us deaf to the voice of God. So as I said, this was happening in the first century also. They were dull of hearing.

And when we become dull of hearing, we are like children in the kindergarten. And what is the loss thereby? We also lose something. And the church loses something.

For example, supposing parents have 10 children at home. All the way from 20 to 2 years. And supposing the older children just are lazy and don't do anything at home.

They don't help in cleaning the house or cooking the food or anything. Can you imagine the tremendous burden that will be on the father and mother? They have to do so much work. Because the older children are lazy.

Many churches are like that. There may be 100 people in that church. But very often all the work has to be done by two elders.

The elders have to do this, the elders have to do that. If somebody is sick, the elders have to go and pray. You mean the other people's prayers, God will not listen? If somebody needs some advice, the elders have to go and give the advice.

That's alright when everyone is a baby. But if you have been in the church for 10 years, you should be able to help others. The whole church must grow.

But it's not like that in many places. See what it says in verse 12. Hebrews 5.12 By this time you should have become teachers.

You know that's like telling a person who is 30 years old still sitting in the kindergarten. And you say you are 30 years old. Other people your age are now teachers in schools and colleges.

And you are still sitting and spelling CAT as CAT and BAT as BAT. When are you going to grow? This is the condition of many believers. You should have become teachers.

But you still need someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God. And you are still drinking milk and you can't eat any meat. And you are still drinking milk and you can't eat any meat.

You are going to a house. In that house there are 10 children from 20 to 1 year old. In that house everyone is lying on their hands and legs and drinking milk.

And the 20 year old is also drinking from the milk bottle. All of them. All 10 of them.

I have never seen a house like that. But I have seen many churches like that. There will be 100 babies sitting there with a milk bottle.

And the father and mother are running around trying to take care of these 100 children. And after they finish drinking, all these will dirty their diapers and underwears. And then the mother and mother run around and try to clean that up.

Even the 20 year old has to do all that. Can you imagine the nervous wreck the father and mother will be? You should have become teachers. You should have become a drunkard.

But you are still drinking milk. What is milk? We will keep on sinning openly and we will keep on washing the sins of Jesus. That's how we started.

We were just sinning all the time. Then we asked Jesus to come in. Forgive us our sins.

But after 20 years, we are still in the same cycle of sinning and confessing and sinning and confessing and sinning and confessing. It's like these children on a merry-go-round. They just go round and round.

They never make any progress. They are sitting in the same place all the time. And you increase the speed, they are still in the same place.

After one hour, they are in the same place. That's how many Christians are. I sinned.

Ask the Lord to forgive me. I am cleansed. Then again sin.

Again confess, again sin. Sin and confess and be cleansed and go on and on and on. Am I going to move to a higher class? Where little by little, I am overcoming some sins.

I am not saying that we will be completely free from sin in one day. A child is not going to get a PhD degree in one day by going to kindergarten. It may take him 20 years.

But he is progressing. So I am not asking whether we have reached perfection. I am not perfect.

But I can say, I am higher than I was last year. Little higher than I was 2 years ago. Much higher than I was 50 years ago.

That is normal. Don't you expect your children to grow? Won't you be disappointed if your children don't grow? God is a father who is terribly disappointed spiritually. You can become a better singer.

Better musician. The people in the world are 10 times better singers and musicians than you. You don't have to be spiritual to be a good singer or a musician.

You can even be a good speaker. The politicians are much better speakers than you and me. You don't have to be spiritual to be a good speaker.

These are not the marks of spiritual growth. The marks of spiritual growth are that you are becoming more and more free from sinful habits that you were slave to. That you are overcoming jealousy and bitterness and backbiting and anger and dirty lustful thinking and internet pornography and pride cheating in the examinations telling lies doing wrong things to make money and not paying back your debts.

If you are not overcoming these things you are not growing spiritually. Because Christ never did these things. So to have the mind of Christ means I becoming more and more like Jesus in my way of thinking about all these sins.

It says here in verse 12 you need milk and not solid food. Then it says in verse 13 that one who keeps on drinking milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness. He is accustomed to the word of forgiveness but not to the word of righteousness.

How do you know that you are not a babe? You love righteousness. You hate sin. Turn over to Hebrews 1 chapter 1 and verse 9 This is the mind of Jesus.

It is describing Jesus here. You have loved righteousness and hated sin. Therefore God has anointed you with the oil of gladness above all your friends.

Above all your brothers. Jesus is the eldest brother. We are told that in Romans 8 29.

We are all younger brothers and sisters of Jesus. That's why when we call each other brother, sister that's the greatest title you can ever have. It's calling a person younger brother of Jesus Christ younger sister of Jesus Christ.

I don't want any higher title than that. But why did the eldest brother get a greater anointing than all the younger brothers? We say because he is the son of God. No.

Please read Hebrews 1 9. He loved righteousness more than the others. He hated sin more than the others. It says therefore therefore that is why God anointed him with the oil of gladness more than the others.

That's why he had so much joy in his life. One mark of your being righteous is that you will have joy in your life. Not in the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament righteousness was a long faced type of righteousness because they were under the law. If you try to do righteousness without the power of the Holy Spirit you will be a long faced serious boring Christian. If you try to live a life it will be a life of boredom a life without joy a life with a long face.

If you don't see yourself no one will come to Christ. I remember once a Christian with a long face was giving a testimony to another Do you want to accept Jesus Christ? He looked at this man's long face He said no thank you I already have enough problems I don't want this also now. No, people must see a radiance in our face.

We may have so many problems in the world everybody has problems but a true disciple of Jesus has got Jesus with him to overcome those problems. That's why he has got joy In the world they get joy by committing sin but it is only temporary When a man commits sexual sin he enjoys for a few minutes and then if he is a Christian he has got a regret for years and he has lost his testimony lost his ministry and sometimes unbelievers also they get diseases that they suffer all their life but the joy is very short lived The Bible says there is a pleasure in sin but the Bible says it is a passing pleasure See Hebrews 11 The Bible doesn't say there is no pleasure in sin The Bible is very honest It says the pleasure of sin is passing, quickly passing Hebrews 11.25 It says Moses rejected the passing pleasure of sin So that is a passing pleasure but here is another pleasure which is forever I want you to turn to Psalm 16 this is the opposite Psalm 16 and verse 11 You must put this opposite the verse we just read in Hebrews Hebrews 11.25 on one side Psalm 16 and verse 11 on the other side David says Lord you will make me to know the pathway of life In thy presence is fullness of joy In thy right hand there are no passing pleasures but pleasures forever more The purest pleasure which you can get permanently is in the presence of Jesus Christ This verse has been a great help for me In thy presence O God is fullness of joy Whenever I lose the joy in my life I know I have left God's presence You have left God's presence because in His presence there is fullness of joy In the Old Testament David could only long for it He could not experience it Because even though he was a man after God's own heart he could not have the Holy Spirit inside That's why he could say O God it is only at your right hand there are eternal pleasures And then when he saw Bathsheba he just forgot about this verse and went for some temporary pleasure That is how these Old Testament people were They knew the truth they confessed it but when sin came they would fall Even a great prophet like Jeremiah would get discouraged and depressed and say Lord I am fed up Elijah he would even say take away my life But Jesus was not like that Why?

Because His way of thinking was different from the way of thinking of even Jeremiah and Elijah In the Old Testament some of the greatest examples were Moses and Elijah But their mind was not the mind of Christ We read once Moses got so angry he took the tablets of stone which God gave and broke it Do you think that is not a sin? It is like me taking the Bible and tearing it to pieces How many of you would do that? We get so angry you tear the Bible in pieces Moses did not have victory That is why Moses is not my example though I can learn many good things from him I can learn many good things from Mahatma Gandhi but he is not my example I have only one example that is Jesus Christ and any brother whom I can see who is also following Jesus Christ and one mark of such a person there will be a fullness of joy in his life because he lives in God's presence In thy presence is fullness of joy and Jesus was the first person who lived on earth like that but now through the gift of the Holy Spirit how did Jesus live like this?

One reason don't say because he was God he was God when he was on the earth it is true but he did not live with his inherent power as God then he cannot be an example for us No you heard me preach that for 25 years that Jesus was God on the earth but he did not use God's inherent power he had as God Here is one example when the Roman soldiers came to capture him and one small Peter tried to defend him with

one sword Jesus said put that sword away you think I can't defend myself? if I speak one word 72,000 angels will come here and finish off these Roman soldiers but I won't do it see as God he could command those 72,000 angels come just one word come Lazarus come he came out and if he had said angels come all 72,000 would have come here he did not use that power he used the power of God

to help others but he never did it for himself he never used his power to turn stones into bread for himself but he used that power to make 5 loaves to feed 5000 people it is a mark of a man of God he never uses God's power to get any personal benefit but he uses it to help others you are a man or a woman of God if you don't use the power to help yourself but you use it to help others that's how Jesus lived so he had the power of the Holy Spirit within him which he gives us and because he was always filled with the Holy Spirit and one of the fruit of the Spirit is joy love joy peace he always was full of love to everybody no matter what they did to him he was always full of joy always full of peace in his mind because he was filled with the Holy Spirit and on the day of Pentecost the Holy

Spirit came to fill any human being also who wants to be filled and now our righteousness makes us joyful I told you solid food is the word of righteousness and those who don't like the word of righteousness are still babies and one mark of this New Testament righteousness we read in Romans 14 17 you know when Jesus said seek first the kingdom of God most Christians don't even know what that means they think seek the kingdom of God first means go out and do missionary work but how many people can do missionary work the number of people who go for missionary work is 1% of believers even if all hundred are willing to go God calls only 1% so you can't go unless God calls you I will never go anywhere in the world if God doesn't call me there if God calls me to go to Afghanistan I'll go but if

God doesn't call me I won't go even to the safest place on the earth so it's not a question of being a missionary seek the kingdom of God first what is the kingdom of God here it is the kingdom of God is this it is not eating and drinking that's the first thing you need to understand it is not eating and drinking if you come to this conference and you are more concerned about whatever food you are going to get here you have not come here to seek the kingdom of God I was once in a meeting for in another denomination for Christian leaders in Kerala three days full day meeting maybe two and a half days like here only for leaders not everybody another denomination three, four, five meetings a day I was the speaker I think there were about 50, 60, 70 people there and they said brother Zach in

our conferences we fast for three days we only drink some coffee or juice that's all but if you want we will arrange food for you I said no Jesus became like the people I will also be like you and I fasted for three days and preached to them I still haven't forgotten what a wonderful time it was now we have all got more understanding than them right we have got the pure truth we have got the best truth in the world can we have a conference for three days with fasting I would like to see how many people will come for that conference I realize children and all and sick people need food but most of us are quite healthy the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking it is righteousness peace and joy in the Holy Spirit we read once in the gospels that Jesus looked at the great multitude Matthew

15 and verse 32 I feel compassion for these multitude because they have been with me now three days and I have had nothing to eat you know that Jesus had fasting conferences for three days have you read that verse usually we don't memorize these verses we memorize other verses but here is a good verse Jesus would speak to them in the morning then another session then he would say ok have a little relaxation and come back no food I think Jesus must have spoken about seven or eight times a day then he said let's go to sleep now morning we get up again two three days I mean seven eight meetings and

there were men women and children there and then the next day after three days Jesus said yeah let's have some food now I would have liked to be in that conference dear brothers and sisters there

is nothing wrong with eating and drinking but when food becomes more important to us than God's word when you forget to study God's word but you don't forget your food you cannot say that you are seeking the kingdom of God first so kingdom of God first is not going as missionaries to north India kingdom of God is recognizing that the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking but what is it kingdom of God Romans 14 17 is first of all righteousness not healing not having the gifts of the Holy Spirit all that is good I believe in healing I believe in all the gifts of the Holy Spirit I have prayed for more than 45 years for the gifts of the Holy Spirit and I still pray but that is not the kingdom of God even the devil has got supernatural gifts but he doesn't have the kingdom of God Jesus had

supernatural gifts but he had the kingdom of God the tragedy today is there are lot of preachers today who have gifts but they are not seeking God's kingdom then they become like the devil he has got gifts but he is not seeking God's if God has given me a gift it is to build his kingdom and that kingdom is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit so the mark of New Testament righteousness is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit Jesus Christ gives me through the Holy Spirit peace in my mind I don't want to quarrel with anybody I don't want to quarrel with my wife or children I don't want to quarrel with my neighbor I don't want to quarrel with any brother or sister I want peace because I am seeking the kingdom of God and also my mind becomes free from anxiety and fear and the other

thing I have is joy not that we are always smiling but joy is an inward thing that is how we know we have got New Testament righteousness that you will have peace and joy in the Holy Spirit otherwise if you say I am a very righteous person I never do anything wrong it may be like the Old Testament people or keeping the law very exactly obeying all the commandments exactly looking miserable and demanding other people should also obey that's not kingdom of God that's not New Testament righteousness in Hebrews when it says solid food is the word of righteousness that is this righteousness the righteousness which brings a peace in my mind and a joy in my mind that brings me into the presence of God to live there all the time nobody could live in the Old Testament in God's presence all the

time even Elijah who said I live in the presence of God he wasn't there all the time otherwise he wouldn't have been depressed Jesus was the first person who lived in the presence of God all the time so there was a fullness of joy in him all the time dear brothers and sisters this is what Jesus purchased for us on the cross don't let the devil cheat you of this fullness of joy and fullness of peace I am not preaching a sermon I am giving you my testimony my life has changed when I saw what the New Testament kingdom of God was I said Lord I want the mind of Christ that loves righteousness and hates sin not just does righteousness but loves righteousness not just avoids sin but hates sin let's pray that we will have the mind of Christ through the Holy Spirit ask God to fill us with the Holy

Spirit that's the answer let's pray Father I pray these words will bring eternal fruit we pray in Jesus name Amen Amen

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