

How The Lord Planted His Churches Through CFC

by Zac Poonen

This sermon reflects on the journey of starting a church in Bangalore, India, emphasizing the importance of seeking the baptism of the Holy Spirit for true transformation and holiness. It highlights the need to focus on genuine holiness in actions, words, thoughts, attitudes, and motives, rather than seeking after numbers or material gain. The speaker shares personal experiences of relying on God's grace over healing and the importance of humility in the Christian walk.

Scripture: Matthew 3:11, James 4:6, Matthew 6:33, 2 Corinthians 12:7, Proverbs 22:4

Topics: "Baptism of the Holy Spirit", "Genuine Holiness"

Description

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Transcript

47 years ago on the 17th of August 1975, the first CFC Church began in our home in Bangalore in India. We never planned to start a church. I don't believe I had that calling.

We were thrust into it by God through circumstances. And as we look back over these 47 years, we just celebrated our 47th anniversary this morning in Bangalore in our church there. So I thought I would share with you something of how God led us.

Since this church also has been linked and connected with our churches around the world that the Lord has planted all these years. I was invited to come here to oversee this church in 2004. I had never overseen any church in the U.S. before that.

So I said I'd pray about it. And when I felt the leading, I came. And I decided that we're going to come share whatever God taught us in other places and build according to God's pattern.

The truth that the apostles proclaimed 2000 years ago in all its purity, in the power of the Holy Spirit, they were simple people. They were not theologians. They were fishermen and never been to college.

But they were filled with the Holy Spirit. They had the one thing essential for building the church, the power of the Holy Spirit, which is lacking tremendously today. Today people go to Bible school and get knowledge.

We don't build the church with knowledge. The tree of knowledge of good and evil brought death. And knowledge even of the Bible brings death.

And the clearest proof of that is the Pharisees. The Pharisees knew more of the Bible than anybody on earth. What did they do with that? They killed Jesus Christ.

Never forget that when you read the Bible, that the people who killed Jesus Christ was the greatest Bible scholars on earth. That's why God rejected, Jesus rejected all of them. God does not build his church with clever people.

Throughout the centuries, God, there have been many very clever people with brilliant ideas. God sets them aside. He takes simple people who seek for the power of his Holy Spirit, which does not bring any glory to man or his cleverness.

And that's what he has done through the years as I've seen all the, we have over a hundred churches God has planted now in 14 countries. And I've seen everywhere God has picked up simple people. If they are educated, they have to lay aside their education when they come to the Lord.

If they are not educated, then of course, like the fishermen whom Jesus selected first is much, much easier. So I mentioned that as an introduction because today there's a lot of emphasis on education and being very clever and educated and people put degrees after their names and they want to, just like in the world, they seek for doctorates. Even the church, doctor of theology and all that garbage.

I remember years ago in a college in the United States said, dear Mr. Zak Poonen, we've been tremendously blessed by your sermons and your books and we want to give you an honorary doctorate. I replied saying, no, thank you. I want to end my life and being known as brother Zak Poonen, not Dr. Zak Poonen.

I have no interest in that. That's all right in the secular world, but not in the church. It's very important to understand how God builds his true church.

It is not by human cleverness. It's not with money. That's the other thing a lot of people think.

Oh, we have a lot of money. We don't have enough money to build a church. Garbage.

I know in India, in our villages, we have some of the poorest people that you can find anywhere in the world. Some who are not even educated. Churches are built, living churches that glorify Jesus Christ.

People have come out of heathen religions, forsaken their idols and come to Christ. We've seen hundreds of them. No, thousands of them come to Christ.

Of course, they have suffered a loss. I mean, they've been forsaken. They've lost their inheritance because their parents would reject them saying you've forsaken our religion.

So they've come out with poverty, but they built the church of Jesus Christ. What God did in the first century, he's doing today. He's doing it with simple people who trust the Lord.

So the principle is not whether you're educated or uneducated. The principle is what do you rely on. You rely on the Holy Spirit or your human abilities and cleverness, etc.

So the truth that the apostles preached in the first century, you know, sort of got buried gradually like ancient cities we read were buried with mud and sand and archaeologists go and dig and dig and dig and discover some of those cities that were buried centuries ago under the mud. And that's what God has done. You know, by the end of the first century itself, the church had become corrupt.

How do we know that? Read Revelation chapter two and chapter three. Five out of the seven churches was so corrupt that the Lord told them to repent and one of those churches, two of those churches, one of them the Lord said you've only got a name that you're alive. You say you're connected with Christ, only a name, but you are dead.

That's the Lord's assessment of that church. Revelation three and to another church, he says, you are poor and wretched and blind and I'm going to spit you out of my mouth. Spitting out of my mouth means you will no longer be my spokesman.

You're out. Repent. But still the Lord tells them, I'm still standing at your door and knocking.

That's his last word in Revelation three twenty. I'm standing at the door and knocking. If you will repent, acknowledge your condition.

See when repentance means a turning around from the direction I'm facing. And if there's not an acknowledgement that I'm facing in the wrong direction, there's no possibility of repentance. Repentance is not just feeling sorry for ourselves.

There are lots of people in the world who feel sorry for what they did. But they do it again. And you will keep on doing it again until there's a hundred and eighty degrees turning around.

Repentance is a hundred and eighty degrees turning around from the direction we are facing. The direction we are facing is self is supreme. I do what I want to do.

I don't wait and pray and see God about anything. I'm clever enough to choose my own way. And I know what I want to do.

I choose my own way. And I think I can serve Christ. Impossible.

The Lord says you've got to turn around from that and say, I don't want to choose my way. I want God's way. And if God's way does not align with my way, I give it up.

That's repentance. And I'll tell you that very few people have turned around like that. And that's why they come and sit in a church without repenting of their way of life, of their stubborn self-chosen way of life.

And they think they are Christians. They are not Christians. They got a form of godliness.

The Bible says about people who got a form, an outer appearance, but it's hollow, empty, nothing inside. So through the years as more and more mud accumulated on the truth that the apostles preached. After some time there's very little visible.

You know, it's like a huge city, wonderful city that the apostles built and it gets buried and buried and buried. And little bit is left. And after some time, even that is covered.

And then dead churches arose like the Roman Catholic Church, which taught people to worship Mary more than Christ. And had idols. If you read the Old Testament, just read the Old Testament, particularly what the prophets preached.

And you'll see that if there's one thing God hated, it was idolatry. It was making an idol of the Almighty God whose image cannot be seen, to make an idol of it and how God denounced it repeatedly. If you want to know how God hates idolatry, just read the Old Testament.

And that was what was happening in the name of Christ in the Roman Catholic system. And so God began to uncover this mud that had covered the truth of the apostles. About 500 years ago, a man called Martin Luther had the boldness and courage, the power of the Holy Spirit to stand against the entire Roman Catholic system and began what is known as the Protestant movement.

Protesting against that which is not true, protesting against that which is against the word of God, against idolatry and things like that, against the worship of idols in a church. And teaching that you can get saved by giving money to the church. They wanted to build a cathedral in Rome and they wanted to collect money.

And the way the popes did it in those days were, tell people to give money and build a church. I mean, this is all in history. I wasn't there.

I'm only reading what others have written about the history of the Protestant movement. You can read it anywhere. You go to Google and you'll find it.

And I'm only saying what I've read and I believe it's true that God began that work. But still the full truth was not recovered. You know, when you do archaeology, when you dig, you don't discover everything suddenly.

Little by little by little, the buildings and others that were covered with mud for years begin to be discovered. And that's how through the centuries, right from 1500 onwards, through the centuries in different places, different parts of God's truth which are hidden began to be uncovered. And always, even, you know, when Luther started what is known as the Lutheran Church, he was a very godly man.

But very often a godly man does not always have godly followers. After one generation, the second generation is not necessarily following the godly man who started it. And so Luther may have been a godly man, but one generation later, a hundred years later, the people who called themselves Lutherans were not actually following him.

And God raised up in the 1700s, a man called John Wesley in England. And the churches, which was started by Luther 200 years earlier, would not accept Wesley. They threw him out, which was known as the Anglican Church in those days.

But God had raised up Wesley to recover some more of the truth, which Martin Luther had not discovered. Holiness, purity of life, loving God with all our heart, loving one another. And then, there was more truth to be discovered.

For example, water baptism, they were still baptizing babies. Luther was baptizing babies, John Wesley was baptizing babies. And the truth of immersion baptism, which many people say, oh, that's just a symbol.

I know it's a symbol. But it's one of the things that Jesus mentioned just before he went up to heaven. He said, make disciples and baptize them.

Why did he make so much of a symbol? I think one of the reasons is to test clever people, to see whether they will humble themselves and accept a symbol also. You know, there's such a lot of pride in us that we think we know more than Christ. Go and read the last three verses of Matthew's Gospel.

He included baptism there just before he went up to heaven. And that's why it's important. I don't place great value on a symbol, but if Jesus said something, it's important for me.

It's the word of Jesus that's important, not the symbol. So I get to take baptism because Jesus commanded it. That's enough for me.

And so by the 19th century, almost people began to preach water baptism and then later on as the early 20th century, people began to preach another thing that had been left out and that is the baptism or immersion in the Holy Spirit, which John the Baptist had proclaimed to the nation of Israel. So little by little, almost all the truth had been recovered. But if you read the literature that's right up to the early part of the 20th century, you hardly ever read about the difference between the New Covenant and the Old Covenant.

If you want to look up the writings of these men, there's no explanation. What is the difference between the New Covenant and the Old Covenant? And yet we read in Hebrews chapter 8, the Old Covenant was abolished. We should not be living in the Old Covenant.

The British ruled the United States, your country, up to 1776. I don't think any American wants to go back to that. That was an old period.

Yeah, the British did many good things, but that was over. And then a new era started in the history of the United States and they claim for freedom and they don't live under the king or queen of England anymore. There's no freedom.

There was that period before your independence and after. It's something like that. On the day of Pentecost, was a dividing line in human history, where through the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the proclamation of the New Covenant, a new era started in the history of the world.

So many Christians are living back in the old era. Thousands, thousands. In fact, the vast majority of Christians are living there.

Imagine if 90% of the United States say, we want to be under the queen of England. You think they're crazy. If one or two say that, I can understand that.

But if 90% say that, I say something's wrong with this country. You got liberty more than 200 years ago and you want to go back to that? It's the same with India. We got independence from the British in 1947 and it made us a free country.

Freedom is what God wants for all of his people in every country. And it'd be crazy for some Indian to say, we want to go back to be ruled by Queen Elizabeth. No, we're a free country.

Why is it Christians want to go back to the old covenant, which God gave to the Jewish people? I can't understand it. It's because the God of the world, the devil has blinded people's eyes so they don't see it. Let me tell you one simple difference between the old covenant and the new covenant.

The old covenant is symbolized by a word law. And the new covenant is symbolized by a word grace. Law and grace.

It's very simple. And do you know that in the old Testament, grace was not known? Because let me read you just one verse. If you have a Bible, turn to John chapter one, verse 17, and you see the difference between law and grace, the old covenant and the new covenant.

The law, the old covenant was given through Moses. Moses was the mightiest man of God of his generation. A man who spoke to God face to face.

And he brought the law. That was God's plan. It was a step towards God's final plan.

Why did God give the law? The Bible teaches us in Romans seven, so that sin can be exposed. James chapter one. I don't have time to show you all the verses, read it sometime.

It says the law was like a mirror that showed you your condition. In today's language, if James was writing his epistle today, he'd say the law is like an x-ray or an MRI scan that shows you your inner condition, which you cannot see yourself. That was the purpose of the law, to show us our inner condition.

But an MRI scan doesn't heal you. An x-ray does not heal you. It only shows you your condition.

So remember the law was like an x-ray or an inner scan of your inner part of your body. It doesn't bring healing. But the doctor says he orders it because he wants to know what's wrong with you and you need to know what's wrong with yourself.

And that's why James only used the word mirror because that was the best illustration to use in those days. He says you look in the mirror, you see what you like. You see there's dirt on your face.

An x-ray shows you what the dirt's inside. But in the new covenant is the medicine, the treatment, the surgery based on the MRI scan. Why does every doctor order a scan or so many tests before they give a treatment? Because then only your true condition can be discovered for you and for the doctor.

So the Lord wants you to see your condition first and then says I've got a solution for that. So we don't come away happy with the MRI scan and remain with the cancer inside your body. But that's how a lot of people are living.

They're living under the old covenant. But one of the things that God gradually began to recover, you know in this recovery of truth, the archeology going down to the bottom of all that the apostles preached was the new covenant. In addition to all the other truths, we don't despise them.

I remember when God began to make the new covenant clear to me about little over 40 years ago. I would not despise Martin Luther for not knowing it. I would not despise John Wesley for not knowing it.

They were very godly men. I wonder whether I would have the courage if I were living 500 years ago to stand against a religious system that sought to kill me like they sought to kill Martin Luther. I respect him highly.

He was a brave man, but he didn't see all the truth. And I'll tell you why I don't despise any of these men. Today I am standing on the shoulders of Martin Luther, John Wesley, the brethren people, William Booth, many godly men through the years.

And so when you stand on the shoulders of many people, you can see further than the guys at the lowest level, you can't see so far. It's not because my vision is better. That's because I've got all these wonderful godly men who went ahead of me and each person was standing, John Wesley was standing on the shoulders of Martin Luther.

And different godly men through the years have stood on the shoulders of others and the man on the top is absolutely foolish if he despises those people down below saying they don't see the truth I see. I say to such a person, brother, you're seeing further because you're standing on the shoulders of all these men. So that is why today we can proclaim truth which Martin Luther could not preach, which even John Wesley could not preach.

Not because we are better men or women, but because we stand on their shoulders. So we humbly respect them but we don't live at their level. There was no electricity in the world 200 years ago.

Do you want to live back in that generation? There was no aircraft in the world 100 years or more 125 years ago. Do you want to live in that generation? In every area we're happy to move on. There were no computers 100 years ago.

You want to live without computers? There was no internet 50-60 years ago. You want to live without it? You see we have taken advantage of every development in science and made use of it. Praise God it's made our life more efficient and why don't we have the same attitude in Christianity? I say to all the Christendom, not just speaking to you, but generally in Christendom, why do people sit and what happened? It's like living in caveman days.

I don't want to live in caveman days. I don't even want to live in the early 19th century. I don't even want to live in the middle of the 20th century.

I want to live right now in the generation we are in, the 21st century and all that God has, I mean science has discovered which we make full use of and we don't realize that we are making use of many, many things that we are benefiting because others have worked ahead of us and discovered those things. It doesn't mean we are better than them. Let me use an illustration from the secular world.

Albert Einstein who lived in the last century was one of the cleverest persons who lived to produce some fantastic theories which you and I can't understand. His brain was way ahead of ours. But do you know that today I can do a mathematical calculation much faster than Albert Einstein? Why is that? I got a calculator.

I got a computer and I just enter the figures and I get the answer. Einstein had to sit and calculate it. He'd take much longer than me.

Does that mean I'm better than him? No. I have more resources. I mention that to say in the spiritual realm also it is like that.

The resources are there. But when a computer and a calculator is available you want to go back and sit down and calculate with your pen and paper. You're going to take a long time.

We need in the secular world be aware of every advantage he's given us. Why not move forward with what the Holy Spirit is revealing to the church? The entire Bible and especially the New Covenant and the New Testament. Let me give you one or two examples of that.

In Romans chapter 6 and verse 14, a verse that we have taught primarily in our church for more than 45 years. Romans 6.14, again the two words, law and grace. Two very important words.

Old Covenant and New Covenant. What benefit do we have under grace which they didn't have under law? In one sentence it says here, sin will not rule over you because you're not under law but under grace. The characteristic of people who were under the law before Christ came was they could not overcome sin.

Sin in its deepest meaning. I mean they could keep the Ten Commandments. At least nine of the Ten Commandments they could keep.

There are many non-Christians in India who keep many of those commandments who never committed murder, never committed adultery, they will not lie under oath, tell a lie under oath and many of those things listed in the Ten Commandments many people in India keep who are non-Christians. So you don't need God's power to keep many of the Ten Commandments. But when Jesus came, he replaced, not replaced but enhanced or gave a deeper understanding of the meaning of the Ten Commandments in the Sermon on the Mount.

So if you want to know the commandments for the New Testament Christian, you got to go to the Sermon on the Mount. And that's why Jesus said the Pharisees had the standard of the law but I say unto you, your righteousness must be more than that because you have to be under grace. And you say Lord how? And the Lord explained it in Matthew 5. The Old Testament commandment was don't commit murder.

I say the equivalent of that is don't get angry. Did you hear that? You read it in Matthew 5. The equivalent of the Old Testament commandment thou shalt not kill in the New Testament is you shall not get angry. How many Christians believe that? How many Christians even try to believe it? You say brother I can't help it.

I get angry. It's like an old covenant person saying I can't help it. I just feel like killing somebody and I kill somebody.

I don't do it every day. Only once in a while I kill someone. What would you think of a man in Israel who said I don't kill people every day but once in a while I'll kill someone.

I can't help it. That's what today Christians are saying. I can't help it.

Once in a while I get angry. I killed my wife. Okay.

What to do? I got upset with my wife and got angry. Do you see what grace is and what law is? Now you may say no, no, no, this is too high a standard. I'd rather live in the caveman days without electricity, without cars, without planes.

You really want to go back and live there? But that's what people are saying. I'd rather live under those 10 commandments. I don't want this New Testament standard.

I want the Old Testament standard. The Lord said in the Old Testament he said you shall not commit adultery. That's a commandment.

Jesus explained it in Matthew 5 saying you don't even lust with your eyes after a woman. You say but that's tough. I'll tell you every single commandment in the New Testament is impossible to obey without the power of the Holy Spirit.

So why did Jesus give these commandments which are impossible for man to obey consistently? I'll tell you. So that we would come seeking him and saying Lord, I cannot make it. Please give me the power of the Holy Spirit.

That's the place God wants us to come to. Why does the doctor show you the scan of your condition? He says you got cancer here, cancer there, cancer here, fourth stage cancer, but I can heal you. If you allow me to do a surgery on you, it'll be a bit painful, but I'll do it free.

You don't have to pay any money. You don't have any insurance. It doesn't matter.

I'll do it free. What would you think of such a wonderful doctor? Are you satisfied with no, no, no, we can't. I don't want to go through all that pain.

You'd never say that when it comes to cancer that can destroy your life, but sin that can send you to hell for eternity. The devil blinds us. That is far worse than a cancer that can only send you to the grave.

This is why God has proclaimed the new covenant through many people around the world in these days. So when I gradually began to understand these truths, I was working in the Navy and I began to read these truths as a young man in my twenties and I saw, when I looked around in Christendom, I saw most preachers were only interested in money. They go to their churches, they're always emphasizing, take an offering.

I've heard of churches, believe it or not, and even Santosh will tell you of some of the early days when he went to some churches as when he came here as a student. They take an offering, good, they put the money in, and after a little while they say, they counted it, it was not enough, we're going to take another offering. Do you believe that? The churches where they took four offerings in a single service.

What are they interested in? Are they interested in overcoming sin? No. They're interested in money. And each pastor boasts about how much our offerings are.

Is that what we have to boast in? Is that what Jesus boasted in? Is it Christianity or some fake religion? It's absolutely fake. Try and find it in the New Testament, you won't find it. So I saw that.

That's why we decided when we started CFC 47 years ago, we decided there are certain principles we're going to have in relation to money. And I'll tell you why. In Luke chapter 16, if you're not familiar with this verse, please look it up.

It's a very, very important verse. Luke 16 and verse 13. If you were to ask people in the world, who are the two great masters in the world, 99% of people, even among Christians will say God and Satan.

Who are the two masters? God and Satan. You ask Jesus, Lord, who are the two masters? He'll say, God and money. Luke 16, 13.

Have you ever heard that, that the two masters in the world trying to control your life are God and money? Now nobody wants to be controlled by the devil. That we get rid of completely. But God and money, that's a little more difficult to make that choice.

Now let me read to you what Jesus, the one you claim to be your savior and Lord, the one whom you claim to be your savior and Lord, see what he said. Imagine if Jesus was standing here and speaking these words, no servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other.

They will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money or wealth. He's not saying you can't have wealth.

Be careful. I want to say it exactly. You cannot serve wealth.

He's not saying you cannot earn money. He's saying you should not be a servant of money. Notice the difference.

We must be exact. Jesus earned money as a carpenter for many years. He had four younger brothers, two younger sisters and a widowed mother to support.

And I'm sure he worked very hard. This was not an eight hour day. I'm absolutely sure.

He worked a lot more than that in the carpenter shop. And there were other carpenters in Nazareth and he had to compete with them. And he would not cheat anybody.

He was upright and so he wouldn't make much money. Upright people don't make much money. Because if there are taxes to be paid, Jesus would have paid them.

So he worked to earn his living. But he never loved money. He would help the poor if he had something extra.

And so what does it mean? He says you can't serve God and money. How do you know who you're serving? Well, here's the test I've applied for myself. I applied it to myself even when I was in the Navy.

And I was earning a lot of money as a naval officer in India. And I took this verse very seriously. I think here, supposing here is a person called A and here's a person called B. And both of them say Zack is my servant.

A says Zack is my servant. B says Zack is my servant. Very simple for you to find out.

You tell both of them, call Zack. Let's see to whom he goes. And A calls me and B calls me and I go to A. So you turn around to B and say you're fooling yourself.

Zack is not your servant. Because when both of you called him, he went to A. Okay now, here's God and money. The attractions of money and the attractions of God, divine nature and all that.

And both of them are calling you in daily life. Come here. You tell me.

Which voice do you listen to? Only you know. Even your wife may not know. Your husband may not know.

But you know in your heart. When you have a choice between a way of righteousness and following what Jesus taught and a way of making more money even if it means a little cheating on the taxes, a little taking advantage of others, a little doing some things which are not absolutely straight. You go that way.

You know if you never knew it till today, I want to say to you in Jesus name. You are a servant of money. You don't know God.

You can talk about being a Christian and knowing the Bible. Dear brother, sister, if you got offended with that, I hope that offense will drive you to Jesus Christ. Jesus offended people left, right and center because he loved them.

If a doctor tells you, you got a cancer and you get offended with it, he loves you. He says, I'm willing to make the treatment free of charge for you. That's what Jesus says.

This will destroy you. That's why I'm telling you to be saved from it. Like sin.

Why did Jesus speak so strongly against sin? Lusting after women will destroy you. It's destroyed many marriages. Look at the number of divorces.

Do you know where do you think all these divorces started? The root of it. Every divorce that's ever happened in the world. I'll tell you.

When a man lusts after a woman who is not his wife, that's the root. It's a little seed. From that springs divorce.

And they call themselves Christians? Far from it. Jesus said it's a sin. It's hardly preached against.

Because people who preach that will not get money. So we decided when we started CFC, certain principles. In every church we plant, or God plants, and there are over a hundred now, we will never take an offering.

We will not put a bag in front of somebody. We will not take an offering. How did they do it in Jesus' time? We read in one place that there was an offering box kept somewhere in a corner.

And Jesus watched that. There was a poor widow. You remember that story? A widow went and put some two little cents into it.

And Jesus told his disciples, you see that offering box? You see what that widow put in? Only two cents. But she has put in more than the hundreds of dollar equivalents that the Pharisees put in. So we saw that Jesus permitted an offering box where people could put secretly and whenever they wanted.

Or not put if they don't want to. But not with an offering bag stuck in front of them every Sunday. So we decided in all of our churches for 47 years, in every country, we have never taken an offering on a single Sunday.

We gave an offering box. In some of those churches, you got to go and ask the elder, where is the offering box? It's not put prominently in the front. There's no arrow saying offering box.

It's there. The people want to find out where the offering box is. They say, oh it's somewhere there.

Well, we have to give an opportunity for people to give to the Lord, because the Lord said, give and it shall be given to you. Good measure. Press down.

Running over. There is a blessing in giving. I'll tell you why.

Is there a blessing in receiving from the Lord? All of us have received many things from the Lord. Health. You've been able to earn your living.

You've received spiritual blessings, material blessings. You've got a house to live in. A job which to earn your living.

You have received much. I want to tell you something. Acts chapter 20 verse 35 says, it is more blessed to give than to receive.

There is a blessing in receiving, but there's a greater blessing in giving. And I'm not preaching what I have not practiced. All my life from the time I became a born again Christian, 63 years ago, at the age of 19 and a half, I have learned to give to God.

And when I finally left the Navy, when God called me, I took my entire life savings, emptied my bank account and gave it all away to God's work. Before that, I would often give to the poor and buy Bibles for people and all that. And I left the Navy with zero in my bank account.

Yes. And I'll tell you this. I've been blessed immensely.

I'm not telling other people to give everything. Jesus did not tell everybody to give, to sell all. And he told one rich man, go and sell all that you have and follow me.

He told me. But 99% of people, he does not tell them. So I will not tell you to sell all that you have or give all away.

Most of the people, Jesus said, give as you feel free in your heart. Some people give 10% or whatever it is. But what I say is, it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Remember that. Not just money. To give some service to a poor person.

In India, most of our churches are among the poor people. Most of our believers, more than 80% of them are poor. Some of them are uneducated, can't read or write.

And they have got to get somebody else to read the Bible to them. But we have taught everywhere, it is more blessed to give than to receive. So we have to make a choice.

Which are we going to follow? So gradually, you know, when you take one step, then the Lord leads you to the higher step. So in the little light God gives you, if you seek obedience, he'll show you more. That's what I've discovered in my life.

It's like you tell your children, if you pass grade 1, all the subjects in grade 1, you can go to grade 2. And if you work hard and pass in all the subjects in grade 2, you go to grade 3. The Christian life is like that. If God has shown you something that is sinful in your life, something unrighteous, and you are determined to set it right, he will show you the next thing. That's how God led me.

And when I did something wrong, even financially, I said I'm going to set it right. And little by little, I began to see that a lot of things that were going on in churches were not according to what Jesus taught. So I remember, way back when I was still in the Navy, I met with two or three others and said, hey, let's start a new church.

Because all these people are not really obeying what God's word says. And so about, I don't remember how many there were, seven or eight of us got together and started a new church. And I think it lasted about two months and collapsed.

It was an Ishmael. Abraham wanted to serve God and say, I will produce a child, not through Sarah. He married a servant woman and got a child through her and lifted up Ishmael and said, oh Lord, here's the child you promised.

The Lord said, rubbish. That's not the child. That's your product, your cleverness.

I will not have it. He rejected Ishmael. And years later when Abraham could not have a child and his wife Sarah could not have a child at the age of a hundred, God said, now I'll give you a child and you'll never be able to boast that you produced it.

Call him Isaac. And in this principle of Ishmael and Isaac, you must always remember that which is produced for God with good intentions. Abraham had very good intentions.

He was helping God out of a tight spot. You know, God was in a tight spot according to Abraham. He's promised me a son and I'm not getting a son through Sarah.

His name will be disgraced. Let me help God out. That's what I tried to do.

And it failed. Many years later, after I left the Navy, I said, okay, I've learned my lesson. Again, I tried to start a New Testament church and gathered a few people.

And I remember how that church closed. I'll tell you, it's humorous. We had a few people meeting together and of course I knew the word of God, I could preach there, but sometimes I'd be traveling and somebody else would lead the meeting.

And so I would come back and I'd ask, I think my wife or somebody, I said, what did you speak about when I was not there? These other people who are leading the meeting. And he said, the main subject last Wednesday when we met was, should we keep our eyes open or closed when we pray? I said, wow, is that the type of church I'm building? Where they spend one hour discussing whether you should keep your eyes open or closed when you pray. I said, Lord, I'm closing down this church.

Another vishmael, Abraham had only one. I produced two and God rejected both of them. I'm trying to tell you that in my sincerity, I failed.

I was sincere. I said, Lord, we want a New Testament church. I'm not seeking anything for myself.

I don't want money. I don't want anything else, but I want your name to be glorified. And I failed.

What do I learn from that? And I want to share with you. If you try to do God's work, you will be a failure. God has to lead you and use you.

You can't try and say, okay, God, I'm going to do this. Help me. No.

You remember there's a beautiful story. If you look for it in the book of Joshua, the early chapters, they had just got into the land of Canaan and they were going to fight with the giants of Canaan. And Joshua saw in a vision, a man standing in front of him.

Joshua says, are you on my side or against me? And that was an angel of the Lord. He said, I'm not on your side or against you. I'm the captain.

Do you want to be on my side or not? That's what he says. You see the difference? You go to God and say, Lord, are you on my side or not? God says, I'm not on your side or against you. I want to ask you, are you on my side? Do you want to join me and do what I tell you to do? That is how we do God's work.

I did not know that. Like Abraham, I thought I had to help God do his work. No, God doesn't need my help.

He wants to use me, but he doesn't want me to do something and say, Oh God, please help me. I'm going to plan you to do this. A lot of work, Christian work is done like that.

Lord, I'm going to this place to do missionary work. Please come and help me. And it's an absolute flop.

How do I know? I come from India where lots of missionaries have come and I know many of them very, very well. There were some outstanding men who came to, people who came to India, like Amy Carmichael, William Carey, really godly missionaries who did a great work for God. But there are others who just brought chaos into Christianity in India.

That's why I say, they tried to do something and ask God to help them instead of God using them. It was they trying to use God. Anyway, so I said, I realized one thing, Lord, I can never in my life build a church.

I'll be a failure every time I try. It's a flop. I knew that what I needed is something called the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

And I had not had that. The first believer, the early disciples were all locked up in a room, scared. Till one day God baptized them in the Holy Spirit and suddenly they threw the doors open and planted a church and planted many other churches after that.

And I learned, I said, Lord, that's what I need. I don't need bright ideas and I need the baptism of the Holy Spirit. So I began to seek God for that with another brother.

And we had prayer meetings, we fasted and prayed and we sought God. Lord, we want this part of the Holy Spirit which the early apostles had. We cannot serve you.

We're trying to serve you with our own ability. I mean, it's like, you know, it's like trying, if somebody gifts you a car, supposing you went to some jungle and you want to help these people in that jungle who travel long distances and you say, hey, I'd like to get these people a car so that they can move from these long distances to get stuff from other place and bring it back home. And so this wonderful man goes and buys them a car and gives it to them and comes back after one year and asks them, well, how's it going? Is it much life easier for you? Say, no, it's much more difficult.

What do you do with it? Well, it's very difficult to push this car from this place to the other place. You gave us a car and now it was much easier when we just walked. And I say, hey, you guys are crazy.

You're not supposed to push the car, man. You have to put some petrol in it and drive it. It's like that when we are ignorant of God's work, when ignorant how God does things.

To be baptized in the Holy Spirit is not just like getting a car, it's like getting an aircraft, taking from one place to the other. You can never do it on your own. It's an amazing thing that God did when the Holy Spirit came and filled them.

I tell you, as I've observed Christianity in many countries and I've gone into every denomination almost in India, I've seen what is lacking is the genuine power of the Holy Spirit. There's a lot of fake. Do you think the power of the Holy Spirit will not be counterfeited? Nobody counterfeits toilet paper.

It's worthless. Or brown paper, worthless. What do they counterfeit? Dollars, hundred dollar bills.

Maybe one dollar bills, nobody wastes time counterfeiting that. A hundred dollar bill, wow. What do you think people will counterfeit in Christianity? Holy Spirit.

What else? The most powerful thing equivalent of your hundred dollars or more. That's what people counterfeit. And the devil would be a fool if he doesn't counterfeit the Holy Spirit's work.

So that's why don't believe everything that you say is the Holy Spirit. Supposing you heard, it's published in the news that floods of counterfeit hundred dollar bills being circulated in the country. Let me ask you, wouldn't you be very careful next time you got a hundred dollar bill? In a bank it's okay, but somewhere else in somebody gives a hundred dollar bill.

I was so shocked to hear the other day, true story. It was in the news of a little boy trying to earn a little money selling lemonade for a few cents in a little table he put outside his house. And one crook, wicked man came.

You know this boy had sold a number of little lemonade to different people and earned quite a bit, a few, some number of dollars and cents. And this man came along and offered him a hundred dollar bill and said, I want a lemonade, give me the change. And this boy collected all the money he had and gave him that change of ninety nine dollars, ten cents or whatever it is.

And when he went back with the dollar bill to the bank, the bank said, this is a fake, it's a counterfeit. That man cheated this poor boy. That's not the end of the story.

Somebody reported that on GoFundMe for the story and the boy got a thousand dollars thereafter. Thank God for good people who are careful. But look at that crook.

What I say is counterfeit hundred dollars are there. Counterfeit Holy Spirit is there. Don't believe it.

I went to some Pentecostal church where they babble something and make some noise and say, it's the Holy Spirit. I said, has it made you holy? That's what I want to know. I believe in speaking in tongues.

It's a gift God gave in the day of Pentecost and God doesn't give it to everybody. He did give it to me. But it's not this babbling that I hear in so many places.

There's a counterfeit. There's a counterfeit hundred dollar bill. There's a counterfeit speaking in tongues.

There's a counterfeit operation of the Holy Spirit. Don't be deceived. That's what I say.

Be careful, be wise. And the very simple test is this. I ask people this question.

If an evil spirit, just use your intelligence. If an evil spirit possesses a man, what will it make him? Evil. Right? I mean a child can say that.

Okay. If a Holy Spirit possesses a man, what should it make him? Tell me. All you brilliant people.

Holy. Evil spirit makes a person evil. The Holy Spirit makes people holy.

But why isn't it making a lot of people who claim to be filled with the Spirit holy? Because it's a fake. I thank God that the Lord showed me. Unclean spirits make people unclean.

Holy Spirit will make people holy. And I said, Lord, that's what I want. I want a genuine holiness that will clean up my thought life.

I thought of holiness I need in five areas. I said, Lord, I want holiness in my actions. Second, every action of mine must be pure.

The way I treat others. I want, secondly, I want holiness in my words. I don't want filthy language.

I don't want to get angry. I don't want to be rude or unkind. I want holiness in my words, especially with my wife and children at home.

And if I'm driving a car and somebody cuts into my way, I want kindness to come out of my mouth. Thirdly, I want holiness in my thoughts, areas which even my wife cannot see, which nobody can see. And not once in a while.

I want holiness there all the time. It's like health. Holiness is like health.

Do you want health in certain parts of your body, but not in other parts, or every part of your body? When it comes to health, we are sensible. And I say, I want holiness in every part of my life, not just some parts. Holiness is like health.

It is spiritual health. So the third area is I want holiness in my thoughts. I say, that's not enough.

I have attitudes to people. You know, we all have attitudes towards somebody. Somebody I don't like.

Somebody I don't like. I don't like his face or I don't like something about him or the way he speaks or his mannerisms. I don't like him.

I want holiness in my attitudes. God loved the whole world. And he loved people who had all types of mannerisms and wicked people and good people.

I want to love. I may not be able to change them, but I can love them. Holiness in my attitudes.

And finally, I wanted holiness in my motives with which I do things. Even my desire to be holy must not be for people to admire me. Oh, brother is actually a great holy man.

No, that's evil. It's like putting a dead lizard into a good bowl of food that you cooked. Boy, you spoiled the whole thing.

You took such pains to prepare that wonderful dish, and then you're going to put a dead lizard inside. Dear me, who can eat it now? That's what you do. You try to live a holy life, and then your aim is that other people should admire you.

That's a dead lizard in there. That's what I mean by motive. So I wanted holiness in my actions, words, thoughts, attitudes, and motives.

And I can't do it, Lord. I'll only produce another Ishmael. I want you to do a work in me.

That is what the baptism in the Holy Spirit, H-O-L-Y, Spirit does. It's the greatest need among Christians. It was the greatest need in me.

And as I sought God for it with another brother, God met with us. And you know what was the result? You know there are many Christians who don't believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, who don't preach it. They think it's a false teaching.

So I was preaching in a Baptist church way back 47 years ago, 48 years ago. I was only preaching. I refused to take the title of pastor.

I hated those titles. I said I will not take a salary. I hated salaries.

I said I'll serve freely. I live simply. My wife and I have learned to live simply.

We will serve you. And I preached the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In six months, they said we want you to leave.

We don't want to hear this. I said okay. I will not cause any problem.

I will not ask anybody in this church to leave with me. I shall quietly leave. Thank you very much.

And I left. And there was another brother there who was assisting in leading the church. He got up and said if you are not going to accept what Brother Zack preaches, I am also leaving.

So two people left. Nobody else, just two of us. That was August 17th, 1947.

Sorry, 1975. 1947 is where India became independent. 1975 is where we became independent of the Baptist church.

So I told this brother Ian, I said what do we do now? Come and meet me. Let's pray this evening in our home. So two of us, our families met together and prayed.

We had zero interest in starting a church. We just wanted to pray. We didn't know what to do next.

So I said what are you doing next Sunday? You are not going anywhere. Come back here. We will pray.

And the next Sunday when we met, one or two others joined us. Okay. We will pray and seek God.

Lord, what do you want us to do next? I have no intention of producing another Ishmael. I have had enough of that. I knew I was not qualified to start churches.

And we prayed and over a period of time, different people started coming one by one. Some came. You know, people are always fascinated by something new.

And some were not happy with what they saw. They went away. People came.

We had a nice turnover. Every week there was a turnover of people. People would come and go.

We never knew. Some would stay. Some wouldn't.

And over a period of time, after six years, we were meeting in our home, in the different rooms in our home. We would clear up the rooms on Sundays and Wednesdays and Fridays when we had meetings. And after six years, we had about 60 people.

And most of them also left after some time. It is very interesting how it all began. I mean, we needed to find a place and we found a place to put up a little hall to meet together.

And God did a work in us, among some of us, a core. Jesus preached to the multitude. There were some concentric circles around Jesus.

One was the big multitude he preached to. And inside that was a smaller group of 70 disciples whom he sent out, you read in Luke chapter 10. Inside that was a still smaller circle of 12 disciples.

And inside that there was a still smaller circle of 11 because one was a crook, Judas Iscariot. And inside that was a still smaller circle of three, Peter, James and John, whom Jesus took with him everywhere. So Jesus worked in concentric circles.

He could commit himself fully to some, a little less to others, a little less to others. So we found the same thing in us. It was something like the church Jesus was building.

There were those who came along to listen, oh, Brother Zach is a good preacher. We like to listen to him. He is not like some of those other boring preachers.

We listen to them. They were not interested in holiness. They were interested in sermons.

They were interested in religious entertainment. Who like to hear a good sermon and go and live as they like. But along with that, there was this core that was being formed, little by little, of people who were really committed to live a godly life.

And I praise God for that. That number grew. And once God had seen there was, now there was a body of people who cared for one another and loved one another and were willing to bear with one another.

We were not perfect, but we learned to bear with one another and love one another and work together to glorify Christ. And then after seven years of that, God began to open doors in other parts of India because we were praying, Lord, does anyone who wants to live a godly life lead us to them? People who are fed up with their own defeated life. And God began to open in different states of India from 1982-83 onwards.

And little by little, God, we found people who are fed up with their defeated life. I remember in one public meeting we had in one place, another state in India, one man came to me and said, I'm fed up with this particular church I go to. I'd like to join your church, Brother Zak.

I said, please don't join us. No. Don't come here because you're fed up with your church.

Come here when you're fed up with your own defeated life. We're not a bunch of people who are fed up with the churches we belong to. No.

We were fed up with our own defeated life, with our anger, our sexual lust, our bitterness, our grudges, our sinful attitudes towards others. We were fed up with that. And we said, Lord, help us to live like Jesus in purity and love towards others, in humility and brokenness.

I said, when you are fed up with yourself, come and join us. You're welcome. Because we are a bunch of people who are fed up with our own defeated life.

We want to be holy. We're not fed up with this church or that church. We disagree with many churches, but we're not here to criticize them.

We criticize ourselves, first of all, because there are a lot of things wrong with us. I said, when you feel, when you come to that place, come to us. He never came.

So that is the basis. We were not interested in numbers. We were interested in people who were sick and tired of their defeated life and who wanted to overcome.

And then through the years we prayed, Lord, if there's anybody else like that who's sick and tired of their defeated life, please bring him in touch with us. We don't want crowds. We want these people who are really longing for holiness.

India has got a population of one and a half billion, one and a half billion, five times the population of the United States. And the area is about one third or one fourth. You know how congested it is.

And 98% of them are non-Christians who worship so many other gods. And I said, Lord, this is like a big haystack. And there are a few needles in this haystack who are seeking for a godly life.

How in the world can I find them? They plunge into the haystack and move all the little grains and look for this needle here and needle there, looking for people, looking for a godly life. And I'll spend my entire life going through these 1.2 billion people. And at the end of it, I may find two or three.

You know what the Lord said to me? You don't have to plunge into the haystack. If you put a powerful magnet outside the haystack, these little needles out in the haystack will come out one by one. What is that powerful magnet? A good holy church that emphasizes holiness, that has no interest in the love of money, that teaches people to forgive those who hurt them, that teaches people to love their enemies, that teaches people to overcome anger and overcome sexual lust, that teaches people to love their enemies and bless those who curse them, that teaches people to do their good in secret without their left hand knowing what their right hand has done.

Build a people like that. That will be such a strong magnet. You don't have to go plunging into the haystack.

One by one from different places they'll come. And I'll tell you, brothers and sisters, in these 47 years, we have seen that. From here and there and here and there.

I say, how in the world did you know about us? Brother Zach, we went to YouTube to watch, listen to some music or something like that. And you know how in YouTube when you're watching something, you get a string of other things on the side of various other programs that are on YouTube. And they look around, they say, this strange Indian man's face I see there.

Okay, let me watch what he's got to say. And that's how some of them came. I say, wonderful.

I say, God saw hunger in your heart. That's why he allowed you to see the strange Indian man's face on the other side of that YouTube page. Because he saw your heart's need.

It's got nothing to do with me. Nothing to do with me. I've got nothing to do with that.

I don't build a church. Christ builds a church. He said in, I will build my church and the church I build, Satan will never prevail against.

And dear brothers, I'm just trying to tell you that is how God has led us through the years to many lands and continents. YouTube is now being watched in 180 countries or more. We send a weekly message out called Word for the Week.

That also goes to over 160 countries. We don't, everything is free. I've written about 30 books.

You can read every one of them free. I don't take any royalty, zero for any of my books. Most Christian authors get so much royalty, they live on that.

I say, no, Jesus never took royalty for what he preached. Paul never took any royalty for the letters he wrote. And I will not take a single cent of work which God is doing.

All these 47 years, we refuse to take a salary from any church. We say, we don't depend on any church. We trust the Lord.

And I had a little inheritance from my dad. We lived on that. Simply, I couldn't drive a car.

I rode a two-wheel scooter for 42 years in India. Purpose of, it is better than what people had 200 years ago. So I was thankful I could go from one place to another.

And thankfully in India, they don't bother about how many people are sitting on the scooter so we could take all our children on them. There are different rules there in that country. But what I say is, we lived simply and I had a wife who was willing to live simply with me.

And we built the Church of Jesus Christ. That is our history. And I praise God one by one, how he has opened here and there.

But we're not interested in numbers. We're not even interested in the number of churches. We thank God we've gone along 47 years.

We love our enemies. We seek to bless all those who curse us. We seek to help people.

Demon-possessed people come to us and like Jesus, they are delivered. We don't claim to have the gift of healing. No, I don't have it.

I say, I can pray for you. Healing is in God's hand. Christ is the only healer.

And to tell you the truth, sometimes he heals, sometimes he doesn't. I don't know why. But I remember once, I asked the Lord about this for myself.

I said, Lord, and what is the answer to this? And the Lord said, Paul had a sickness. Great Apostle Paul had a sickness. He prayed three times, Lord, heal me, heal me, heal me.

And the Lord said, no. Imagine not healing the great Apostle Paul who had sacrificed so much for the Lord. And the Lord said, instead of that, I'll give you grace.

You're in great danger of getting proud, Paul. I need to give you the sickness to keep you humble. Aha.

So I learned that sometimes God uses sickness to keep us humble. Lord, that's the thing. Humility is more important to me than healing.

Any day, any day, give me a choice between humility and healing. I'll choose humility because I get grace. God gives grace only to the humble.

And I was desperate to get grace to overcome every sin. And so whenever I've got any sickness, whether it's a small fever or a big one, I say, Lord, if you think grace is better for me but not healing, give me grace. But if you think healing is good enough for me, I leave the choice with you to give me healing or grace.

Or both. And I'm a very happy man today. Some things he heals, some things he doesn't.

It's okay. But he always gives grace. So if your greatest desire in life is for grace, not for money or for healing or anything else but grace, I'll tell you this.

Seek the kingdom of God first and all the other necessary things he will always add to you. God helped us to educate our children that they could get good jobs, etc. He will care for every need in your life.

Not according to your desire, but the way he's planned it. And it'll go well with you and with the next generation in your family also. This is the Christianity we preach.

So we're very thankful that we've celebrated 47 years of God doing this work in different lands. I just wanted to share that with you. Whatever in it, whatever I said in it, if it is a blessing for you, take it.

Whatever you felt you can't take, throw it away. But follow the Lord. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, help us to proclaim and receive the whole counsel of God. All that Jesus died to purchase for us, we want all of it. Thank you, Father.

In Jesus' name.

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