

(Kitchener, on 2012) Building Fellowship

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of fellowship in the Christian life, highlighting that perfection in the new covenant is related to our vertical relationship with God and that fellowship is a test of this relationship.

Duration: 1:06:43

Scripture: Matthew 5:23, Romans 12:2

Topics: "Fellowship"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the power of faith and the importance of believing in the ability to move mountains through prayer. He encourages listeners to have strong faith and not doubt God's ability to remove obstacles in their lives. The preacher also emphasizes the priority of building a relationship with God and being holy rather than focusing on collecting money for the church. He concludes by urging listeners to remember and meditate on the words they have heard until they become a reality in their lives.

Transcript

We have been considering in these days the subject of pressing on to maturity or perfection. And what we have been thinking of the last three days was mostly only perfection in our personal life. How we can be free from sin and we can be free from being enslaved to money or we can be free from the fear of Satan or anxiety, discouragement and free from seeking man's honor etc.

etc. But it's a very personal thing between us and God. But in the cross there were two arms and they speak to us about two relationships, one vertical and one horizontal.

So there is no perfection in the new covenant which is only related to our vertical relationship with God. If that is real, if pressing on to maturity, first of all it's in our vertical relationship. But it leads on to a horizontal relationship of fellowship with one another.

And that is a good test of our vertical relationship because we can very easily fool ourselves that we are spiritual if we only think of the vertical arm of the cross. And I'll show you one verse that teaches that very clearly. 1 John and chapter 4. In 1 John chapter 4 and says in verse 20, on John 4 verse 20 it says here, if anyone says I love God, that's the vertical relationship.

But he hates his brother or doesn't love his brother. He is not a believer. There's another name for him.

He's a liar. Did you hear that? If someone says I'm a believer and I love God, but there's some believer you hate, somebody you don't like, somebody that gets you on your nerves, your husband, your wife, your neighbor or some brother you just don't like or some sister. The right name for you is liar, not believer.

That's God's word. Sometimes we don't like to face up to these things. But if I face up to what God's word says, I can be saved from it.

To me God's word is like a scan. A scan that scans my heart and tells me you're a liar. Because you don't love your brother.

You don't love your sister. And the reason given is, if a man cannot love his brother whom he has seen, he cannot love God whom he has not seen. It's a very simple logic.

Here's somebody you can see. You can't love him or her. How in the world can you love an unseen God? That is the logic the Holy Spirit uses.

And it's very helpful, you know, like God gives us a test. In the medical world there are many tests to find out, have you got diabetes? They just put your blood on some little strip and you can find out whether you got diabetes. They can test your blood pressure.

These tests, I mean, it's no use arguing with the machine. If you got diabetes, you got it. Arguing with it doesn't solve the problem.

And here's a test. It's like a test. The test of my love for God is that I love one another.

And if I say, I'm getting passionate in my love for God, oh well, then you must be pretty fervent in your love for one another as well. Otherwise, it's a deception. You see, we are creatures who are very prone to deception.

And there's a warning given us in Scripture concerning this in Romans chapter 12. It's good for us to look at these warnings. Romans chapter 12.

You know, Scripture does not give us warnings that are unnecessary. You don't give warnings to your children that are unnecessary. Warnings are given concerning real possibilities.

You warn your children when they cross a road or many things like that. And if you travel in an airplane, they give you warnings about what to do in case the plane has to land in emergency. And so here is a warning given to us, an exhortation.

Romans chapter 12 and verse 3. Says here in Romans 12, 3, by the grace given to me, Paul says, I say to you, every one of you, now listen to this exhortation, don't think of yourself more highly than you ought. But think of yourself with a sober judgment in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Now, why do you think this, such an exhortation is given if we don't face this danger? What is the danger? The danger is that I can think of myself more highly than I really ought to think.

Nowhere in Scripture does it say, don't think less of yourself. Why doesn't it say that? Because none of us are in danger of thinking less of ourselves. That's why.

We're always in danger of thinking more about ourselves. That's why nowhere in Scripture does it say, don't think less of yourself. Even those people who say, I've got low self-esteem.

If you look at the root cause of it, it's pride. That's it. Those people who say, I've got an inferiority complex.

Deep down, it's pride. The fundamental root cause of everything is pride. If a man is humble, he has no complexes.

A really humble man, a really humble man does not feel superior to anybody, does not feel inferior to anybody. Because he's comparing himself with Jesus. He doesn't compare himself with others.

So, here is an area where we can think of ourselves more highly than I ought to think. What is that? I think I love God fervently, but I can't love my fellow believers. But that is the test.

And so, holiness without fellowship is a deception. That's a phrase I've used for many, many years. Holiness without fellowship is a deception.

You think you're holy, but there's no way to test it. The test comes when you have to relate to other people, and you find you can't get along with them. You always have a problem.

And you can't have fellowship with anybody. And you think you're so holy, that's why nobody can have fellowship with you. And that's exactly what the devil wants you to think until Jesus comes, that you're so holy, and you have such high standards, that there's nobody in the world or in your city whom you can have fellowship with.

The devil can leave you in that illusion. It's good to wake up and say, Lord, that may not be the truth. It may be just self-deception, maybe because I'm thinking too highly about myself.

Let me humble myself and see whether my holiness is genuine, whether I have humility. You see, humility is a very integral part of holiness. A holiness without humility is a deception.

A holiness without fervent love is a deception. I mean, these are tests by which we can find out whether our holiness is genuine. You know, I've often thought, we know that Jesus is our example.

We're told to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. But let's look at Jesus in his earthly life. I've often thought, supposing you were in Nazareth 2,000 years ago, and you heard of a carpenter there, an unusual carpenter, whose name was Jesus, the son of Joseph.

You don't know he's the son of God. You just heard that he's a very nice man, because he had never done any miracles or preached or anything. And you'd like to go and meet him.

And here you find this 25-year-old carpenter working away in his shop. And you want to go and meet him. And you spend maybe half an hour with him.

And you spend half an hour with Jesus. I've thought about this. Supposing I spent half an hour with Jesus when he was 25 years old.

He's not a well-known preacher, not known as the son of God. What impression would I have when I come away from that? After spending half an hour with Jesus, what is the main impression I would get? I mean, I can get an answer as I read the Gospels. And I'll tell you the answer I got.

I don't think Jesus would over-awe me with his holiness and make me feel, oh, what a holy man. I can't come anywhere near him. Not at all.

Not at all. I think I would come away from meeting 30 minutes with Jesus, I think I'd come away saying, boy, what a humble man. I've never met a humbler man in all my life.

Even though I'm nobody, he made me feel equal to him. And he made me feel as if I was important and not him. I think that's the impression I would get.

And that is genuine holiness. And I'll tell you something else that I've seen very little of that in Christian leaders. Most Christian leaders are so big.

They're not like Jesus. And they're presenting an image of Jesus to the world, which is totally false, that Christ is not like that. First of all, Christ doesn't go around collecting money from people.

Like, you know, a lot of television preachers today collect money so that they can travel in a private plane instead of traveling in a regular flight like the rest of us do. And they say, we've got to do it for the gospel's sake. Imagine, I've often thought about that.

Supposing somewhere where Jesus was preaching, Judas Iscariot got up and said, hey, fellas, don't you think we should buy a new chariot for Jesus to travel from Galilee to Jerusalem? Let's all take a collection to get a good chariot for Jesus. He's been walking all these days. Jesus would have told Judas, shut up and sit down here.

I don't want any chariot. I don't want any collection of money. I didn't come here for that.

That's what Christ would say. I say, that's the difference between him and a lot of preachers today. So we need to have a very sober estimate of ourselves in this area.

My fellowship with others is a pretty good test of whether my vertical relationship with God is right or not. And my relationship, first of all, my relationship with my husband and wife at home is one of the clearest tests. I don't mean that your wife has to be spiritual.

Your wife can be like the devil himself. It doesn't make a difference. Or your husband can be like the devil.

That cannot change you if you're a Christian. People behave like the devil towards Jesus Christ. When they killed him on the cross, how were they behaving? They were behaving like the devil himself.

They were instigated by the devil to crucify Christ. And how did Jesus respond to that? Father, forgive me. They behaved like the devil, but he behaved like God.

And so I can relate to people who behave like the devil with me. I have the power of the Spirit. I will behave like Christ, irrespective of how they behave.

In other words, the power of the Holy Spirit is such that my reaction to another person's actions has got nothing to do with his action. Jesus said, be like your heavenly father. In Matthew 5, he said that.

Who makes the sun to rise on the good farmer and the evil farmer. He makes the rain to fall on the righteous farmer and the unrighteous farmer. Here is a two farmers.

One is an atheist and one is a God-fearing Christian. And they both need sun and rain for their crops. Do you know that God sends equal sun and rain on the crops of both of those people? Doesn't that look pretty unfair that he gives the same amount of rain and sun to that atheist as to this person who fears and loves

him? It's not unfair.

It's just his nature. His nature is to give and to love. And you can't change that.

You can't change that. And just because you're evil doesn't mean the sun is going to stop shining on you. God is still love.

And Jesus said, when you are a son of God, you'll behave like that. I cannot say that that person has made me evil. There was a missionary lady in India called Amy Carmichael.

She once made a statement. It's very significant. He says, when you complain that somebody else provoked you to speak bitter words, or somebody else provoked you to speak angry words, she used an illustration.

She said, if I'm carrying a cup of very sweet water, say orange juice or something, and somebody shakes it very heavily, what's going to spill out? Bitter water? How could that be? You can't say his shaking made the water bitter. No. If bitter water spilled out of that cup, it means all the time there was bitter water inside and you did not know it.

You thought it was sweet water. You thought you were so holy till somebody shook you up. And when all the bitterness came out, say, thank God for that man who treated me like that.

I discovered what was in my heart. I discovered what was in my cup. You should be thankful for the people who provoke you.

Because they're the ones who really show you what's inside your heart. I'll tell you, the people who say nice things to you and flatter you, they don't show you what's in your heart. So don't blame somebody else for your wrong attitudes.

That's the point. If my relationship with God is right, it will make me love people. Because my love is not dependent on that fellow's behavior to me.

See, that's the difference between human love and divine love. Human love is 100% dependent on how that fellow treats me. If he treats me well, I treat him well.

If he treats me badly, I treat him badly. If he says nice words to me, I say nice words to him. If he speaks bad words to me, I speak bad words to him.

If he gives me gifts, I give him gifts. What's this? That's human love. We think it is wonderful.

Such people only love their friends. Those who are good to them. My spirituality is tested by my enemies.

You see, a candle, you know, you can't say that people are so evil, that's why I can't be a Christian here. It's like a candle saying, I can't shine here because it's so dark. Imagine a candle saying, I can't burn here, it's so dark.

Which candle ever says that? It doesn't matter how dark it is, the candle will burn. It doesn't matter how dark this room is, when you put on the light, it burns. You turn on the switch, the lights burn.

No bulb here says, oh, it's too dark here, I can't burn. Christians say that. Oh, brother, the office atmosphere is so bad.

It's very difficult to be a Christian. It's exactly like a light saying, it's so dark in this room. Difficult to shine any light here.

You see the ridiculousness of it. I'm trying to blame my surroundings for my own lack of power. And that's exactly what the devil wants us to do.

Keep on blaming people, keep on blaming circumstances. I'm okay. I love God with all my heart, but the circumstances are not right and the people are not right.

That's why I can't shine. That's not the reason. The reason is we're not filled with the Holy Spirit.

That's the real reason. Because it says in Romans 5, in verse 5, I believe this is the mark. A lot of people ask me, what do you think is the mark of being filled with the Holy Spirit? I say, here it is.

Here's the mark of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Romans 5, verse 5. God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Middle of that verse.

To me, that is the clearest mark that I'm filled with the Holy Spirit, that my every corner of my heart is filled with love for every person I contact. That doesn't mean I can help all of them. The world has got 7 billion people.

It's impossible for me to help all of them. But it means I have an attitude of love towards everybody. Love does not mean I have fellowship with all of them.

Jesus loved the Pharisees, but he had no fellowship with any of them. No. A lot of people we can't have fellowship with because they're not interested in fellowship with us.

Or they are legalists. But we can love them. Jesus loved everybody.

He loved Judas Iscariot who betrayed him. The great proof of it is was that when he came to kiss him to betray him, he put his arm around him and said, friend. He called him a friend.

There was zero bitterness or anger in Jesus heart towards the man who came to betray him to be, to take him to be crucified. You see that even there when Peter cut off that person's ear, Jesus was sensitive immediately to pick up that ear and heal that Roman soldier. I have a feeling I'm going to see that Roman soldier in heaven.

Because I cannot imagine if I were that Roman soldier seeing such an act of love and not repenting. I think he's going to thank Peter for cutting off his ear. He'll say, hey Peter, because of you, I got converted.

Thank you for cutting off my ear. I saw the love of Jesus. You know how God turns our bad deeds into some good result.

It's one of the worst possible things you can do to cut off somebody's ear. And even that Jesus turned into something good. That's to me, that's one of the great things I've discovered about Christ.

That even our mistakes, wasn't that a mistake, Peter cutting off somebody's ear? God turns it to something good. It's wonderful. So the mark of Jesus being full of the Holy Spirit was he could love people.

He could love the people who came to kill him. He loved people who came to capture him and take him away. He had no bitterness because he knew my life is controlled by my heavenly father.

And all these people can fulfill my father's will. So many years they could not capture him because it was written his hour had not yet come. When his hour came, the father allowed him to be captured.

You know, when we live by faith like this, the love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. That is the mark of the Spirit filled life. And after having observed Christians for more than 50 years, I can tell you without any hesitation, that is the mark of the Spirit filled life.

And if a time ever comes in my life where I don't love Jesus more than anything on this earth, more than father, mother, brother, sister, wife, children, my own life, my reputation, my honor, my ministry. Love, God's love poured out in our hearts. That is the mark of the Spirit filled life.

And so, I cannot be perfect if I'm not perfect in love in towards my fellow believers. Now, this is something which is not there in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, the Christian life was very individualistic.

That's why you find the Old Testament prophets all worked alone. Whether it was Jeremiah or Isaiah or even the greatest prophet, John the Baptist, they all worked alone. They could not work with another person because they'd fight.

Because they did not have the Holy Spirit within them to fill them with the love of God for people who are different from us. They could not be made perfect. They could not press on to perfection.

But one of the wonderful things about the New Covenant is that God enables us to work in fellowship with others without conflict. And that's why after all those examples of the Old Testament, you know, for example, you start with Enoch, one man, he walked with God. Did he have fellowship with anybody? No.

The next man who walked with God was Noah, just his family. Couldn't have fellowship with any other brother. And it was like that with all those people, Abraham all by himself, and Moses, one lonely man walking with God, Joshua, Elijah, Elisha, all the way to John the Baptist.

But as soon as Jesus came, he started sending his disciples out two by two. Have you noticed that? He never sent any of his disciples alone. He said, this is a new age.

In the New Covenant, there is no such thing as an individualistic ministry. It's a body ministry. And he introduced that by sending out his disciples two by two.

It's very, very important to see that. If you do not know where that is, it's in Luke's Gospel in chapter 10. It says he, after this, the Lord appointed 70, 10 verse 1, Luke 10 verse 1, 70 others and sent them two and two, two and two ahead of him.

Why two? Because when there's two people, there's an opportunity for fellowship. When you're all alone, there's no fellowship. You can see your fellowship with God, but what about the horizontal arm of the cross? There is no horizontal arm when you're all alone.

And so Jesus was introducing, this is a new age. This is not like the Old Testament, where you have a lone Jeremiah and a lone Isaiah and a lone John the Baptist, two by two. And so when you come to the Acts of the Apostles, you see Peter and John going together to the temple.

It's not Peter alone. And you see Paul and Barnabas, God calling Paul and Barnabas. And if Barnabas drops out, then Paul and Silas.

It's always two by two throughout the New Testament because there there's a fellowship. Or think of the words of Jesus in Matthew chapter 18. In Matthew chapter 18 and verse 20, a very well-known verse, which all of you know.

Matthew 18 and verse 20, where two or three, minimum is two, where two or three have gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst. Minimum is two for Jesus to be in the midst. If you're all alone, I'm sorry to say, Jesus is not in the midst because there is no midst.

What is the midst when you're all alone? And there is an authority that two people can have, which one person can never have. Where two, let's take the minimum of two, are gathered by the Holy Spirit, Jesus is in the midst. Then what happens? Verse 19, in Matthew 18, 19, these two agree together.

Jesus makes them one. And then what happens? Verse 18, they bind Satan's activities on earth and those satanic forces in the heavenlies. You know, Satan lives in the heavenlies.

It says that in Ephesians 6, 12, Satan's forces in the heavens are bound in what they try to do on earth in your home or in a church. It needs a minimum of two. And in a home, that's supposed to be husband and wife.

That's why the devil is in the business of always trying to separate husband and wife, make them fight with each other, quarrel with each other, have misunderstandings with each other and suspicions of each other. And every imaginable thing is not just divorce. Divorce is the final end of that separation.

But a lot of husbands and wives who are not divorced, who are not one, the devil's between them, not Jesus. How in the world can they exercise authority? Satan sits back and has a great laugh. When a husband and wife are not one, Satan says, great, I can enter that home anytime I want.

You know, when a husband and wife are one like this, Christ is in between, the devil can't come through. But he tries to bring a wedge between a husband and a wife, somehow separate them. You know the purpose, so that he can come through into your home.

And you may be mature enough to stand against him, but your children are not. And that's why he gets at your children. And that's how it happens.

Where two are separated, the devil says, I'm in the midst. When two are together, Jesus says, I'm in the midst. You can have your choice.

That is why it's so important that you, husbands and wives, do everything in your power to remain united. I don't mean you have to agree on every single thing. There are 101 things on earth you can disagree on.

Should America have gone to Iraq, husband and wife can disagree, it doesn't matter. Christ can still be between them. They must be united in their attitude to sin.

They must be united in their attitude to the devil. That's the place of unity. All other areas, they can have different tastes of food and so many differences.

It doesn't make a difference. God makes us different. But in the important things in relation to God and sin, they must be united.

Never allow a misunderstanding to remain. Never allow unsettled matters to continue overnight. Then you have authority over Satan.

Let me turn you to Ephesians chapter 4. Ephesians in chapter 4. Please look at verse 26. If you get angry, don't sin. And in any case, don't let the sun set while you're still angry.

In those days when they didn't have electricity, sunset was the time people prepared to go to bed. Today we have electricity and we live much, sit up much later. But those days they would wake up before sunrise and they had a full day and go to bed by sunset or pretty soon after sunset.

And so the meaning there is, if I were to paraphrase it, don't go to bed with matters unsettled between you both. That's the meaning. Husbands and wives, don't go to bed with something unsettled.

Why? Verse 27. Next verse. Because then you will give Satan a foothold in your life.

He's put a foot inside your house. You've given him an opportunity. He's put a foot inside.

You know how people can put a foot inside the door and then you can't shut it. That's all the devil wants. He says, I don't want you to open the door wide for me.

Just give me a little foothold. I'll enter a little. Just give me a little time.

I'll walk right in. So if you go to bed with things unsettled between you and your husband, you and your wife, the devil's got his foot inside the door already. It's just a matter of time before he walks right in and occupies the whole house and first of all destroys your children and then little by little other things.

Creates confusion, messes up your finances. All types of things. I mean the devil can cause all types of confusion.

What's the solution? To bind Satan's activities and bind those satanic forces in the heavenlies. Two together. Don't go to bed with things unsettled.

That's a good time limit God has given us. Of course a spiritual man doesn't wait till sunset to apologize to his wife. A spiritual woman doesn't wait till sunset to apologize to her husband.

He does it immediately. I mean this verse, verse 26, is something like saying if a thorn gets into your foot, at least take it out by sunset. So you say, oh well I have time limit till sunset to take out my thorn.

You've got to be off your head. You've got time limit till sunset to take out the thorn from your foot. Whose foot is going to be damaged? Yours.

What do you do when you get a thorn in your foot? You don't. Even if you have a time limit till sunset, you take it off immediately. That's what a spiritual man does.

But God makes allowance for those who are not spiritual. He says, okay even if you're not spiritual, at least by sunset settle matters. I give this exhortation to almost every, not almost, I think to every single marriage which I conduct in our church through many years.

I told them, dear brother, sister, I give you one exhortation. It doesn't matter if you don't have money. It doesn't matter if you don't have anything.

But forgive one another quickly. Ask forgiveness quickly. Don't wait.

Don't stand on your pride and say let him come and ask forgiveness first or let her come and ask forgiveness first. Ask forgiveness quickly and forgive quickly and don't go to bed without asking forgiveness from another. And I was so delighted when one brother came to me after 20 years.

He said, brother Zack, you conducted our marriage 20 years ago. I said, yeah. And you gave us an exhortation 20 years ago.

And that exhortation was never go to bed without settling matters with your wife, your husband. And I want to tell you, brother Zack, there's somebody in our church. I have kept that every single night for the last 20 years.

I said, wow, that's a greater miracle than raising the dead. Can you say that? Can you say that it's been true at least for the last one year? You wonder why there's so many problems in your home? You think Christ causes problems? Who causes problems? Only the devil. How did he get in? How did he get the foothold? How did he put his foot through the door? You can say, oh, my children are like this or the circumstances are like this.

We're in need because there's a recession. We try to blame every other person except ourselves. You know, it's like Adam.

We've all got Adam's nature. God says to Adam, did you eat of that tree? And there's only one simple answer, yes or no. But you know how Adam beats around the bush.

Well, you know, Lord, this woman, I tell you, you don't realize how terrible she is. She took this fruit and gave it to me. And Lord, don't forget, by the way, you are the one who gave me this wife.

So who's to blame? The wife and God. And finally, in small letters, I ate it. That's how we take the blame.

You know, pass it on as much as possible. Very little of the blame is left for us. That's why he got kicked out of paradise.

The thief on the cross went into paradise. You know why? Exact opposite of Adam. He said, Lord, I'm to blame.

I don't blame my father and mother for not bringing me up right. I don't blame the bad company that I got that made me a murderer. I don't blame the judge or the policeman for any false accusation.

I and I alone deserve to be crucified. I don't deserve 10 years in jail. I deserve to be killed.

I'm such a bad man. Lord, please remember me. And the Lord says, let me paraphrase the words, you're really guilty and you acknowledge it.

You deserve to be in paradise. Today, paradise is made for those who will immediately accept the blame. It's not made for righteous people.

It's made for sinners who are willing to acknowledge that they're sinners. There are no righteous people in the world, by the way. Everybody's a sinner.

Everybody's a sinner, but some are willing to acknowledge it. The others are not. That's the only difference.

And paradise is made for those who are willing to acknowledge it and not put the blame on anybody else. I want to ask you, my brothers and sisters, have you have you developed a habit of never blaming anybody else? It's one of the fundamental requirements for fellowship. If you have an inner attitude of blaming another, you can never build fellowship with that person, even if you keep quiet about it.

I remember years ago when we were starting building our little fellowship back in our hometown. And I had to meet a brother once and we had fixed a time. And I was there on time and he was not.

And this had happened before. I said, this guy is always un-punctual. He's never on time.

Here I'm sitting here with wasting my time. And of course, when he comes late and he says, I'm sorry I'm late. I'd say, oh, that's okay.

I didn't mind your coming late. That's what I'd say. Hypocrite.

But as I was thinking like this, the Lord said to me, I'm seeking to make you one with that person. If you keep judging him inwardly, you will never become one with him. And your punctuality is not because you are so spiritual.

It's because you spent 11 years in the military. That's why you become punctual. So don't judge him.

He hasn't spent 11 years in the military. I said, oh, right. So I didn't think I was so spiritual.

And then it was easy to fellowship. And the other thing the Lord told me is, his weakness may be un-punctuality, but he's got some strong points where you got some weaknesses. And I realized then that in the body of Christ, we make up for each other's weaknesses.

And that's how it is in a husband and wife too. When a young couple are considering marriage and they come to me for counsel, I take a paper and I draw a little diagram. I say, I want you to remember this all your life.

And I draw an egg on that paper. And then I say, now I'm going to break this egg. And I draw beneath that the broken egg.

And you know how it is when you break an egg into two halves. It's all full of pokey, jagged edges on both sides. It doesn't look very nice.

You can hurt one another with those jagged edges. And I said, that's how you are. You got a lot of jagged edges in you.

And wherever you got it. But the wonderful thing is, I said, wherever this side has got a jagged edge, this side has got a depression. It's amazing.

And wherever this side has got a jagged edge, this side has got a depression. It's perfect. And I said, I'll show it to you now.

I put the two together and they've all disappeared. All the jagged edges have disappeared. That's how your marriage should be.

That wherever the other person has got a strong point, you got a weak point. Where he's got a weak point, you got a strong point. And that's how God brings people together.

It's like when somebody says, well, my wife and I, we love the Lord. We're common in that area, but we are the exact opposites of each other. Oh, well, then God must have really brought you together.

No doubt. Because you're the exact opposites. You just fit in with each other.

And it's a question of recognizing that. There's a strong point there, but there's a weak point in me. And there's a weak point in me.

There's a strong point in her. That's great. God's made us one.

And if I recognize that instead of boasting about my strong points and demeaning her for her strong points, we can have wonderful fellowship. This is what the devil tries to destroy. He makes you concentrate on your strong points.

And she says she doesn't have it or he doesn't have it. And makes you concentrate on his weak points or her weak points. And then there's division and strife.

In every relationship, whether in a marriage or in a church, there will be tensions because we got the flesh. We are human. But the solution to those tensions is forgiveness.

Be quick to ask forgiveness. Jesus said, for example, in Matthew 5, 23 onwards, he said, when you come to offer an offering to God and you suddenly remember there that your brother has got something against you. What did he say you must do? In Matthew 5 and verse 23.

Leave, verse 24, he says, leave your offering. The next verse, leave your offering there. Go first and be reconciled to your brother or your wife or your husband.

Then come and offer your prayer. You know, we had an offering box. We had an offering box.

We don't take an offering with bags in our church. We keep a box in the back so that people can give secretly and cheerfully. We had this verse on it for a long time.

First be reconciled to your brother and sister. Then give your offering. We were actually discouraging people from giving.

See, a man takes out some money to put in the offering box and he sees that. I haven't settled anything back. I said, put it back in your pocket.

Put it back in your pocket. I don't think you'll see an offering box like that anywhere in the world. But we were interested not in people's money, but in people becoming holy.

That's why we put such a verse there. We were more interested in people's relationship with God, not to get more money from them for our church. We were not interested in that.

God will provide us enough. But God had given us a commission in that church to make people holy, to be reconciled with their brother and sister, not to collect money. See, that's the thing.

If you put God's priorities first in your life, God will build your church. And we decided in every area, we're going to put God's priorities first in our life, in our home, in our church. So when there's a tension between two people, say a husband and a wife, say they had a little conflict, and both people realize things are not too good between us.

Now the big question comes, who is going to apologize first? It's a very big question mark. What is the answer? In the villages in India, the husband says, I'm a king. The wife is a slave.

She must apologize first. What's the right answer? I say, okay, we can find the answer from Scripture. In Scripture, we read that God and man had a conflict.

Oh, ever since the day of Adam, there was a break in communication, fellowship. Who took the first step? Who? God. Why? Why not man? Because God is more spiritual.

So we get the answer. Who should take the first step in a conflict between husband and wife? The one who is more spiritual. And since both of you think you're spiritual, you should be just running into each other's arms.

Who's the one who hesitates? Waiting for the other person to take the first step, the carnal person. Don't forget that the next time you have a conflict. Don't let the devil get a foothold.

If you want to be like God, do what he did. Take the first step to restore fellowship. Man was not even interested.

I'll tell you, I was not interested in fellowship with God. God pursued after me for 20 years before he got a hold of me and got me to fellowship with him. I'm so ashamed of it.

The picture I have in my mind is a bridegroom waiting 20 years at the altar saying, I'm ready to marry you. And I lazily walk up 20 years later and say, okay, Lord, I'll marry you. I should be ashamed of myself.

See the love of the bridegroom. See the love of God. And he's, Jesus says, I want you to, I want to make you like I am.

Like I treated you. I want you to treat other people. Is that difficult? Forgive others the way I forgive you.

Humble yourself like I humbled myself to wash your feet. Humble yourself like I waited so long for you to come. Why can't you wait? This is how we build fellowship.

Why can't you forgive like I forgave you? You know, it's a very serious thing not to forgive other people. I believe this is the main reason why many people do not grow spiritually. I'm absolutely convinced.

I'm also convinced this is one of the main reasons for many sicknesses in the world. Now, don't misunderstand me. Most sicknesses in the world are because there's a curse on this earth, not a curse on us.

When God, when Adam sinned, God did not curse him. Please remember this. People who talk about generational curses and all, it's a lot of rubbish.

When God, when Adam sinned, God did not curse Adam. He cursed the ground. Read Genesis 3. He said, cursed is the ground.

The first man God cursed was Cain. When he killed his brother, he said, Cain, you're cursed. Adam was not cursed.

It's pretty serious to have a wrong attitude towards a brother. I'll tell you that. And just a word about generational curses.

There is a statement in the law that under the third and fourth generation, your children will suffer. But my question is, which covenant is that? Is that under the old covenant or the new covenant? That's the important question. If it's under the old covenant, it doesn't apply to me.

I live under a covenant sealed not by the blood of bulls and goats. I live under a covenant sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ. And there is no such thing in the new covenant.

And that is why any sin that my father or grandfather or somebody else or ancestor did can never affect me. I'll tell you why. It did affect people in the Old Testament because they were still children of Adam.

You know that everybody remained a child of Adam. Nobody could be a child of God in the Old Testament. Did you know that? Nobody could look up to God and say, dad, father, nobody, not even John the Baptist.

They were all servants, not sons. That's why you never hear anybody calling God father in the Old Testament. When Jesus came, he said, now you fellas, you don't have to call God, God, call him dad, call him father.

So, they were all in Adam. Abraham was in Adam and Elijah was in Adam and Elisha was in Adam. And so, yeah, there could be generational curses there.

It's like a tree called Adam and every branch had a lot of curse from Adam onwards. And a lot of sicknesses, I think about 80% of sicknesses, that's my guess, is because of this curse on the ground. The ground is cursed and our body is made from this ground.

The same mud that you see on the earth, our body is made of that and you'll discover that when people die. When their body becomes mud, you don't see any difference between their mud and the rest of the mud on the earth. They're made of mud.

And there's a curse on this ground and that curse is on our body. That's why we die. Otherwise, we wouldn't die.

If there's no curse on our body, we'd never die. And that's the reason for 80% of sicknesses. But there is a 20% of sicknesses which are not due to the curse, which are due to an unforgiving spirit.

You know that some sicknesses are caused by sin. Have you read of that man who was lying in the pool of Bethesda for 38 years? Lame, whom Jesus went and healed. In John chapter 5, you read there were multitude of people who were sick and there was one man who was lying there for 38 years, couldn't walk.

You know why he was sick? That wasn't because of the curse. That is because of sin. That's what the Bible says.

Let me show you in John chapter 5. After Jesus healed him, a few days later, John 5, 14. Jesus found him in the temple. John chapter 5 and verse 14.

Afterwards, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, see, you're whole again now. You're healed. Stop sinning.

Or like it says in my Bible, don't sin anymore. Otherwise, something worse may happen to you. In other words, the first thing that happened to you was because of sin.

And if you continue to sin, something worse will happen. So there we see that some sicknesses are due to sin. In John chapter 9, there was a blind man, blind from birth, and the disciples asked Jesus in John 9, verse 2, Rabbi, who sinned? Why is he born blind? This man or his parents? Who sinned was it? Was it a generational curse? Jesus said in verse 3, neither this man, John 9, verse 3, nor his parents.

So I see in John 5 that a man's sickness was due to sin. I see in John 9, his sickness is not due to sin. That's what we must remember.

There are sicknesses which are not due to sin. There are sicknesses which are due to sin. And therefore, I believe with all my heart, a lot of people have ulcers in their stomach because there's so much anxiety and tension.

They always live with tension, tension, tension. They have problems in their stomach. It's a sickness.

You can take any amount of antacids, but what you need is to be free from anxiety. There are people who have migraine and arthritis and all types of things because they haven't forgiven somebody. Not everyone, at least 20%.

So whenever I pray for someone, I always ask them, have you forgiven everybody? I'll tell you why, because it says we've got to confess our sins before we can be healed. See James chapter 5 and verse 16. James 5, verse 16, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so you can be healed.

Healing comes through confessing our sin, but the point is to whom you should confess it. That you see in the previous verse. In verse 14, verse 14, if anyone is sick among you, let him call the elders of the church and let them anoint him with oil and pray for him.

So here's a sick man lying in bed and two elders come and pray for him. There are only three people in the room and it's only in that context it says confess your sins so that you can be healed. It's not getting up in the church and confess your sinning sins to every Tom, Dick and Harry.

That's the teaching of psychology, which has unfortunately infiltrated the church. But here it says that you must confess your sin, otherwise you won't be healed. So whenever I do this function of praying for somebody as an elder, I ask them one question.

I said, have you forgiven everyone? Because if you haven't forgiven everyone, the channel is blocked between you and God. No matter how much I pray, God's healing will not flow down on you. You're blocked it with an unforgiving spirit.

You got a bitterness against somebody. I'm not asking you to go and have fellowship with them, but you must forgive no matter what somebody did. Some people may have harmed you so badly that the best thing is to avoid contact with them.

You know, if some man has molested a girl, of course she must forgive him, but she should steer clear of him for the rest of his life. Not go anywhere near him. He's a dangerous man.

But you don't gain anything by not forgiving. Avoid certain people. You know, the Bible says, pursue peace with all men.

And I've discovered through the years that sometimes the best way to pursue peace with somebody is by avoiding him altogether. Because he's a troublesome fellow. If I go near him, he'll kick up a quarrel.

I want to pursue peace, so I steer clear of him and go somewhere else. So pursue peace with all men does not mean we go and seek fellowship with all men. Sometimes the best way to pursue peace is avoid that person completely.

But we must forgive. Forgiveness and fellowship are not the same thing. I can forgive everybody, but I can't have fellowship with everybody.

I can fellowship with very few people. But forgiveness must be total and complete towards everyone. And I believe that's the reason also why there are some problems in our life that never get removed.

It's a very important part of this horizontal aspect of fellowship is forgiveness. Supposing you say, I'm very holy, I'm devoted to Jesus, but you haven't forgiven somebody. That is a deception.

Holiness without fellowship is a deception in a church. And holiness without forgiving others is a total deception. Turn with me to Mark's Gospel, Chapter 11.

This is one of the most fantastic promises that Jesus gave. He's telling you how to solve problems in your life. How to solve major problems in your life.

Would you like to know? Here it is. Mark 11 and verse 23. Jesus said, truly I say to you, if anyone says to this mountain, this mountain is a picture of a big problem.

That's standing in your way, hindering you from going in to do the will of God. And you say to this mountain, be taken up and be cast into the sea. And he doesn't doubt in his heart, but believes it will happen.

It will be granted. It will be done for him. Now, I'm not interested in moving physical mountains into the sea.

What will I get from that? Nothing. So, it's not referring to a physical mountain at all. Jesus used picture language.

You don't get anything by moving a mountain into the sea, but mountain is a picture of some massive problem that's hindering you from going on to the place where God wants you to be and what God calls you to do. And you know that God calls you to do this, but there's this massive problem which is hindering you from doing the will of God. It's hindering you from going where you should go.

What should you do? You got to get that mountain out of the way. And an obstacle in your path is not a signal to retreat, but a challenge to your faith. I've taught that for many years.

An obstacle in your path is not a signal to retreat, but a challenge to your faith. Lord, I'm going to do your will. I faced many obstacles in my path, and I've seen them removed.

In Jesus' name, because I've trusted the Lord. Otherwise, I couldn't do what God wanted me to do. You say, why does God allow that obstacle to come? To strengthen your faith.

Do you think if you moved a mountain out of your way, you'll ever forget it for the rest of your life? Never. If you happen to move one mountain out of the way, you'll never forget it for the rest of your life. And imagine if you move four or five.

Imagine how strong your faith will be. And those people who never faced a problem in their life, well, I feel sorry for them. Their faith must be pretty weak, because they've never been able to move anything.

So, but what should you do? Verse 24. Let's look at this next verse. Therefore, I say to you, Mark 11, verse 24, whenever you pray for something, believe that you've received it.

That means when you pray against this obstacle in your way, don't hesitate. Say, well, I'm not so sure whether God can remove it. You know, this may be too massive a problem.

I don't know. Too big a problem for God? You know, I picture myself sometimes like a little ant. In God's eyes, I'm smaller than an ant.

And let's take an illustration. Supposing I see a small little ant, and we've got a lot of them in India, crawling on the ground, a small teeny ant carrying one grain of rice to its little hole in the wall or somewhere. And if that ant could speak to me and say, Brother Zach, can you please carry this little grain to the to my little hole there? I'd say, no problem.

I can carry it quite easily. For all of you who are paying attention here and not being distracted, could you please listen to me? Thank you. That ant is not, thinks it's such a burden.

It's a burden for that ant, sure, to carry a little grain of rice all the way up there. It's no burden for me. Ant says, really? You don't realize how heavy this is? I say, no problem.

And that's how we take our teeny weeny problems and we think, oh God, can you handle this? Of course he can. What's it he can't do? He must have faith. But not only faith, there's one more thing.

Next verse, Matthew 11, Mark 11, sorry, 25. When you pray, you see this mountain, you got plenty of faith, but have you forgiven everybody? So before you pray to remove the mountain, no matter how much faith you have, if you've got anything against anyone, forgive him so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. Dear brothers and sisters, it's possible there are mountains of sickness and mountains of problems that are standing in your way.

They're not being moved, even though you trusted and prayed and claimed and rebuked it in the name of Jesus, because there's somebody you haven't forgiven. It's very, very important to forgive, because that paves the way for not for fellowship with everybody, at least my heart is clear. And then with those whom God brings me together with, I can fellowship.

Where two or three are gathered together by the Holy Spirit. And that's what we call the church. The church is not just a bunch of people sitting in a meeting, that's a congregation.

There's a difference between a congregation and a church. The Bible speaks of a church as a building. Let me show you this verse, Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 21.

The church is called a building, Ephesians 2 21. The whole building being joined together rises up to become a holy temple for the Lord. That's the church.

In India, all our houses are built not with wood, but with bricks. And the way a house is built is a truck will come along with 20,000 bricks and put the bricks on the roadside. And then the mason will take one brick another and build a house.

The pile of bricks there is a congregation. If you put the bricks next to each other and build them in fellowship, you get a house. If those bricks lie on the roadside, I'll tell you what will happen in India.

Every day, one or two will disappear. A few will disappear. And after a month or so, there's no bricks there.

Somebody else has built his house with your bricks. And that's what happens when you're a lone Christian. Maybe you're sitting in a congregation of 20,000 people, but you're not built in fellowship.

The devil can pick you off one by one by one by one. He does that. But if in a building built with cement and plaster, how can you take a brick out of that? You can't.

Nobody can steal a brick from a building. That's the advantage of fellowship, a holy temple built together. Fellowship.

There are certain inconveniences in fellowship, sure. You can't do what you like. For example, if you have a brick sitting on top of you and a brick underneath you and a brick to the left and a brick to the right, it's very inconvenient, but it's very safe.

I'll tell you that. That's how a church is. There are certain inconveniences, sure, because people are different, but it's safe.

It wasn't very convenient living inside Noah's Ark with all the stench of the animals and no place to have a shower. And on top of that, all the animals there for one year. But it may have been inconvenient, but it was the safest place on earth at that time.

And that's how the church is. I often think of the church like Noah's Ark. There are people like lambs, there are people like tigers, there are people like elephants, there are people like crocodiles, and there are all types of people in the church.

But we live together, we fellowship with each other, and it's the safest place on earth. And one day when destruction and everything is over, that Ark will remain, the church will remain. So don't complain that people are different from you.

They are. God made them like that. But he teaches us how to take up the cross and deny ourselves and fellowship with that husband who's so different from you, that wife who is so different, that brother, that sister.

And he wants to build fellowship. And he says, forgive them as I forgive you. That's one of the greatest messages in the New Testament.

That's how I demonstrate that my love for God is perfect. The proof is I can forgive everyone. And I'm not forgiving everyone to get my migraine and arthritis and ulcers healed.

No, sir. I'm forgiving everyone because Jesus forgave me. That's it.

Whether I get healed or not, that's secondary. So let's build fellowship with one another. Let's pray.

Let's bow our heads before God. Many of you have been here every evening. And I believe there are many, many things God has spoken to you, my brothers and sisters.

I want to encourage you to remember them. And if you can't remember them, get a copy of the CD or something and listen to it again. Remind yourself of whatever God spoke to you.

And keep on reminding yourself until the words become flesh in you. The words that you've heard become real in your flesh. And you are transported to a level of life that you never experienced till now.

God wants you to be an overcomer. God wants you to be a victor in every situation over Satan, over sin. He wants you to build fellowship as a church.

He wants you to build fellowship in your family. And I pray that it'll be far better in your home from today onwards than ever till now. Heavenly Father, bless these words to our hearts and bring forth fruit that lasts for eternity.

Through the power of your Holy Spirit, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you very much.

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