

Living by Christ's Principles

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of following Christ's principles and living as His true disciples in the world.

Duration: 1:22:44

Scripture: Mark 7:10

Topics: "Christian Living", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of following the principles and values of Jesus Christ in our daily lives. It highlights the dangers of loving money and self, the need for contentment, and the significance of having a godly attitude towards wealth. The sermon also addresses the pitfalls of judgmental attitudes, curiosity, and superficial religiosity, urging listeners to focus on internal transformation and following Jesus' example of humility, forgiveness, and love.

Transcript

I never expected to see so many people here on a working day. There are some distinctive emphases that we have in CFC churches, which are not found in other churches. We are not here to criticize other churches.

We are not here to compare ourselves with other churches. The Bible says, in 2 Corinthians 10, that those who compare themselves with others are foolish. So we will not be foolish.

God is the only judge. But one of the things that God wants on earth is a pure testimony, a light that is not dim. And the sad thing is, the testimony of many Christian churches is a light that is very dim.

And that's always happened in the centuries. You know, even in Revelation chapter 2 and chapter 3, you read about churches, seven churches, five of them, the light was very dim. They still call themselves churches, but the light was very dim, so dim that Jesus said to one of them, you only got a name that you're alive, but you're actually dead.

But then there were some other two churches that were really strong and powerful. So the Lord looks, you know, he examines each church. You see that in Revelation 2 and 3, that the Lord examined every church and he told them, this is wrong with you.

So I believe even today, today is not seven, there are thousands of churches in the world, but the Lord examines every one of them. And our desire is not to impress people, but to please the Lord. That's our only desire as a church.

We're not in competition with anyone. We're not trying to say we are bigger or better or any such thing. But we want to please the Lord.

So when we think of pleasing the Lord, we want to know how can we please the Lord. There are different ways in which people think they can please the Lord. Many people think that the important thing is evangelism, reach out and bring more and more people to Christ.

But they're just saving them from hell. And most evangelism is just to save people from hell, just take them to heaven. Is that all? Is that all that the Lord wants from us? No, it's a lot more than that.

Jesus said, go into all the world and make disciples. A disciple is a follower, not just one who comes to Christ to go to heaven. It's a completely wrong gospel that is only interested in saving people from hell.

If you turn with me to John's gospel in chapter 10. John chapter 10. You see what Jesus spoke of as his sheep.

And this is the definition that Jesus gave about his sheep. And all of us should examine ourselves by the definition Jesus gave. Because all of us sitting here, we can imagine we are his sheep.

Okay, let's see. He's the good shepherd. John 10.

Jesus said to certain people. Verse 26. You know, these are the Jews.

Verse 24. Who were gathered around him. Verse 24.

Certain Jews gathered around him. John 10 24. And he told them, you do not believe.

Because you're not my sheep. He told certain people, you are not my sheep. Well, how do we know that? Jesus explained it.

Because my sheep hear my voice. Number one. And the Lord says, number two, I know them.

And three, they follow me. The sheep of Jesus are those who follow him. And those who follow him.

He says, I give eternal life to them. And they will never perish. Now today's gospel, the false gospel is.

You don't have to follow Jesus. You just believe in him. My sheep are those who believe in me.

And I give eternal life to them. That's not what he said. Read carefully.

He could have said that. My sheep are those who believe in me. I give them eternal life.

No. My sheep hear my voice. And I know them.

And they follow me. And I give them eternal life. What about if they don't follow me? Then he will say, verse 26, you're not my sheep.

Because he did say to certain people, you are not my sheep. And then he said, if you were my sheep, you would follow me. Then I would give you eternal life.

So among all of us who are sitting here. Who are the sheep of Jesus? Sitting here. Now all of us can think, yes, I am.

I hope so. But Jesus' definition is. My sheep follow me.

I believe this is where Christendom has failed. Many people wonder why we have certain. Emphases in our church.

And why we don't have certain emphases. For example. We sing songs in our church.

Just like other churches. But we don't place a great importance on music. For some churches, music is a very important thing.

Drums and. You know, very high quality instruments and all that. I say, well.

I never see in the New Testament. Any of that. I don't see Jesus going around with instruments.

Or his disciples going around with instruments. Or the apostles going around with instruments. They are useful in the sense.

Chairs are useful. You can sit on the floor. You can follow Jesus by sitting on the floor.

Chairs are useful. Have it. But you can't say you must have chairs in the church.

No, it's not essential. If there is, use it. So music is like that.

If you have instruments. If you have good music, use it. Music is as essential to the church as chairs are.

You know, in the village. Most of our churches in India are in the villages. They all sit on the floor.

Chairs are not essential. In the first century, music was not essential. We are not against it.

They would sing. You read about Jesus also singing. But there were no instruments.

So if there are instruments, use them. Just like if you have chairs, use them. Don't sit on the floor.

But when you make that a major thing and the importance of music, then we are not following Jesus because it was not at all important for him. So when we say I want to follow Jesus exactly, do it exactly as he did it. Then when we read the Gospels, you see what were the things that Jesus emphasized.

Not in what he did, but what he preached. For example, people have asked me, Brother Zak, why don't you preach a sermon on physical healing? I say sure, I want to follow Jesus. Show me one sermon in all the Gospels which Jesus preached on healing.

One. Show me five sentences he preached on healing. You won't find it.

I say that's why I don't do it. I follow Jesus. So all these people are preaching about it.

You have to say they are not following Jesus because Jesus never preached it. They get their sermons from the Old Testament. But Jesus actually healed thousands, thousands and thousands of people who were miraculously healed.

Blind people, lepers and deaf people and even dead were raised. So listen to this. Jesus never preached one sermon on healing but he preached, but he healed thousands.

Today we have the opposite. Thousands of sermons on healing and hardly anybody really healed. A lot of fake healings like the magicians.

So that's what I mean by if we are not careful, we can be deceived by what is called Christianity today. I always say compare it with Jesus. Why is the church called the body of Christ? For example, here you are meeting here.

You should be meeting as the body of Christ. Why is it called the body of Christ? There are many titles given to the church like God's people. Israel is also called God's people.

A kingdom and priests. You know that Israel was also called a kingdom and priests? The bride of Christ. Do you know that Israel was called All these people, all these titles given to the church were given to Israel except one title which was never given to Israel.

Body. Nowhere in the Old Testament do you find Israel called a body. They were not a body.

They were a congregation. A congregation is a multitude of people who are not connected with each other. 600,000 men in the wilderness.

Many women and children. 2 million people. Not connected with each other.

It was a congregation. And where a church has got people who are not connected with each other, it's a congregation. It's not a church.

It's not a body. In a body, like my body, there's no part that's not connected to the other. They don't all have the same function.

For example, my hand is doing something else. My tongue is doing something else. Eyes and ears are doing something else.

All of us may have different functions in our body. That's a body. In a congregation, you don't have to work together.

Each is a separate individual. So why is the church called the Body of Jesus Christ? Because God sent his son to earth in a body. That was the first body of Christ.

The physical body of Christ. And the church is called the Body of Christ because it was supposed to continue doing what the first body of Christ did. You see that particularly in Acts of the Apostles in Chapter 1. In Acts of the Apostles, now the reason I'm mentioning this is because you've got to apply this to yourself.

If there's a church meeting in Sharjah, this is the function of the church meeting in Sharjah. It is to be a representative of the Body of Jesus Christ here. Whether you're three people or 150 people, it makes no

difference.

So, you know, Luke was the one who wrote the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. And he wrote it to some Greek man called Theophilus. Luke himself was a Greek man.

He's the only writer of the Bible who's not a Jew. Job was probably the other one. But apart from Job, the only person who, all the others who wrote the Bible were Jewish people, descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, except Luke.

So, Luke wrote two books, the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. So, he gives a title to his first book. He says in Acts 1.1, the first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach.

So, what is Luke's title for his Gospel? Here it is. All that Jesus began to do and teach. Read it carefully.

All that Jesus began to do and teach. He did and then he taught. He never taught what he had not done.

And we should never teach what we have not done. That is hypocrisy. If you teach what you have not done, it is hypocrisy.

Jesus did and taught. Luke's Gospel is all that Jesus began, think of that word began, to do and teach. All that Jesus began to do and teach.

So, think of that word began. All that Jesus began to do and teach. So, what is the title Luke would give to the Acts of the Apostles? All that Jesus continued to do and teach.

That's the title for the Acts of the Apostles. So, Luke's Gospel is all that Jesus began to do and teach through his physical body. Acts of the Apostles is all that Jesus continued to do and teach through his spiritual body.

In both cases, the body of Christ. There a physical body, here a spiritual body. That's why the Acts of the Apostles begins with the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Acts chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost. That was the beginning of the body of Jesus Christ. You know, just like on Mary, the beginning of the physical body of Christ was when the Holy Spirit came upon Mary and a baby was born.

That was the body of Jesus Christ. The physical body. The same Holy Spirit now came upon 120 people who came upon Mary there and produced the physical body.

Now comes upon 120 people on the day of Pentecost and makes them together into the spiritual body of Christ. So that Jesus can continue to do and teach what he began to do and teach through his physical body. Now 2,000 years have gone by and we claim to be the followers of that original 120.

I hope so. That's what all Christians claim. If so, we need to experience the Holy Spirit coming upon us not to make us speak in tongues primarily, but to make us one body.

See the first... Tongues is a good gift. I'm not against it. But the first body of Christ, which is the physical body of Christ, never spoke in tongues.

You know, Jesus never spoke in tongues. So it can't be that important. But he did and taught what God wanted him to do.

So this body now has got the Holy Spirit coming upon them making them one. I pictured it like 120 pieces of iron that were put into a furnace and came out as one piece. 120 small pieces of iron put into a burning furnace and came out as one piece.

One body. That's what happened on the day of Pentecost. People were completely different from each other.

Began to accept one another and work together. And what was their aim? To... You know, like Jesus said when Philip once came to Jesus in John 14 and said, show us the Father. That's enough for us.

And Jesus said, you don't need to see the Father. The Father is in heaven. He is invisible.

If you have seen me, you have seen the Father. Do you know that verse? You should know it. John 14.

John 14, verse 8. Philip said, Lord, show us the Father and it's enough for us. And Jesus said, what do you mean? If you have seen me, the last part of verse 9, you have seen the Father. The Father is invisible in heaven.

But Jesus said, you can see me, right? If you have seen me, you have seen the Father. What he meant was not his face. He wasn't saying the Father looks like him because the Father doesn't have a body.

What he meant was, you have seen what I do. You saw me just now washing your feet. That's the Father.

You saw me having compassion on the poor and the weak. That's the Father. You saw me chasing out the people who make money in the name of religion.

That's the Father. If you have seen me, the way I conduct myself, that is the Father. Not physical appearance.

What Jesus did, what he preached, that was showing the world the Father. So, what does the physical body of Jesus do? Manifest the Father. Then Jesus told his disciples in John 20, and verse 21, after the resurrection, he said, as the Father sent me, I send you.

Why did the Father send Jesus? Now, there are many reasons, but we can think of what we just saw. He who has seen me has seen the Father. So, we read here, this is what Jesus came.

Why did the Father send him? So that people could see what the Father was like. The Father is invisible. Jesus came on earth so that people could see what God was like.

Now he says, exactly like the Father sent me, I am sending you. I hope everybody here who claims to be a born-again Christian, I hope you hear that word of Jesus to you. As the Father sent me, so I send you.

So what are we supposed to do as a church? We are supposed to say to the world, if you have seen us, you have seen Jesus. You see the challenge? Jesus said, if you have seen me, you have seen the Father. As the Father sent me, I send you.

So we have to say, if you have seen us, you have seen Jesus. That is the standard to which he calls us. We are not called just to preach messages or to go to heaven.

No. The reason for the shallow, pathetic state of Christianity today is because they haven't seen our calling. They think it is just to save people to go to heaven.

No. It is to be able to say to people, if you have seen us, you have seen Jesus. The way we live and the way we relate to one another, Jesus said, all men will know you are my disciples when you love one another.

So that is why it is so important for each of us individually to follow Jesus. That is why we prove we are his sheep. And then when we relate properly to one another, we can say, if you have seen us, you have seen Jesus.

But can you tell me, I am not asking if you have seen a church which is perfect like that. We are also not perfect. What I am asking is, have you heard of a church which is even teaching that? Emphasizing that.

Have you heard of a church emphasizing that? I mean, I have been a Christian for 56 years. I have never heard a church emphasizing that. No church is perfect.

Not even ours. But if we emphasize this truth which God has called us to, at least we will come close to it. If you know the direction we are supposed to run, as we run, we will get closer to it, even if we don't reach there.

But if you don't know the direction you are supposed to run, you will never get near the goal. So it is very important to see what we are called for. All that Jesus continued to do and teach through you and me.

My sheep hear my voice and they follow me. That means they look at my example and follow me. See Hebrews in chapter 12.

The whole New Testament emphasizes this, not just one or two verses. Hebrews 12, it says, since we have such a great cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every sin. And last part of verse 1, let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, we can say who ran the race in front of us, the forerunner, who endured the cross and sat down on the right hand of the throne of God.

So we are to look at Jesus and follow that example. Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the way he ran this race, that's the way we are to do it. Now, Jesus very often used to say when he was on earth, follow me.

Once he told people, follow me, I'll make you fishers of men. Follow me, follow me, follow me. He very rarely said, believe in me.

You read the gospel sometimes, try and find a place where Jesus said to people, believe in me, maybe once or twice. But follow me so frequently. Whereas today the emphasis has been shifted to believe in me.

And that belief also we think is just an intellectual belief that Jesus died for me. That's why our Christian life is so shallow. Because that's not what Jesus said.

He said, follow me. He was always placing the emphasis on following, not intellectually believing in him like most Christians do. So I want to ask if all of you, my brothers and sisters, are serious about following Jesus in your life.

In every situation, to seek to follow him. Please turn with me to 1 Peter, and chapter, yeah, it's okay. 1 Peter and chapter, 1 Peter chapter 2, 1 Peter and chapter 2, verse 21.

For you have been called for this purpose. Now, read this carefully. You have been called for this purpose.

Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth. I don't know many Christians even take these verses seriously. My brothers, sisters, you ask yourself, have you taken these words seriously? You have been called for this purpose.

Most people would say to go to heaven. No. You have not been called for this purpose to go to heaven.

You have been called for this purpose to follow Jesus Christ's example, to follow in his steps, who committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. If you take that seriously, you will really long to be free from sin, and to have no lie in your mouth, ever. Because it's a result of following in his steps.

You see his steps, and you walk in them. Very few Christians take this seriously. That's why I don't believe there is sheep.

Jesus turns around to a lot of people and says, you are not my sheep, you are not following in my steps. The way to life is very narrow when you preach. The way to life is narrow.

Even among the hundreds of people Jesus preached to, very few found that way. And I find even in our churches, so many people come and join the church and listen to it, but very few have found the way of following in his steps. So, when Jesus said, follow me, what did he mean? There are two things in Jesus, his life and his ministry.

His life he had for 33 and a half years. The same Godly, humble, pure, loving life. His ministry, he had only for 3 and a half years, after he was anointed with the Holy Spirit.

So, was he telling us to follow him in his ministry, or in his life? Everybody has to follow. My sheep hear my voice and they follow me. We have to be honest.

If Jesus was saying that every one of his sheep must follow him in his ministry, then all of us, not some of us, all of us must walk on the water, all of us must be able to feed 5000 people with 5 loaves of bread, all of us must be able to open blind eyes and heal the sick and raise the dead. That's his ministry. Anybody here doing it? Zero.

Does it mean we are not following in his steps? He never told us to follow in the steps of his ministry. He told us to follow in the steps in his life. This is where the entire Christian world has gone astray.

They say, how shall we follow Jesus? We got to heal the sick. Not one or two people. Every one of his sheep must follow in his steps.

So if you preach that in a church, we don't preach it, but a lot of churches preach it, then they must preach that every single person here must follow in Jesus' steps and open blind eyes and walk on the water and feed 5000 with 5 loaves. They are dishonest. They pick out certain things and follow that.

Let me tell you, my brothers and sisters, we can take an example from Paul. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11, follow me as I follow Christ or be imitators of me just as I am of Christ. In what way did Paul say, this is the

Holy Spirit speaking through Paul, 1 Corinthians 11 verse 1, be imitators or followers of me as I am of Christ.

How are you and I supposed to follow Paul? Forget about Christ now. Just Paul. Paul is at a lower level.

He says, I am following Christ, you follow me. You know there are two people in the New Testament who said follow me, Jesus and Paul. Paul said here, follow me.

So, how am I supposed to follow Paul? How are you supposed to follow Paul? Paul raised the dead. Paul healed the sick. Paul planted churches.

Paul wrote scripture. Are all of you supposed to do all that? No. Paul was talking about his life.

You must distinguish between life and ministry. He says in the next chapter, 1 Corinthians 12, he says all don't have the same gift. There are many members, 1220, but one body, one is the eye, one is the head.

So, he says you can't be like me in my ministry. No. They may have the hand, they may have different ministries, but they have the same life.

So, when you read 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Corinthians 12 together, you see that he is not talking about ministry, he is talking about life. So, we are supposed to follow Jesus and Paul in the way they lived. Not in their ministry.

Not that all of us have to become apostles or all of us have to raise the dead. That's never happened in any church. But we are all supposed to follow Jesus and Paul in the way they lived because they are the apostles by which they lived.

That's what it means to follow Jesus. For example, when people harmed Jesus, physically, spat on him, slapped him, he forgave them. What does it mean to follow Jesus? If anybody in the world hurts you, you have to forgive them.

First learn to forgive your wife and your husband before we reach out to other people. That's why Jesus said you must first be a witness in Jerusalem, then Judea, then Samaria, then the outermost parts of the earth. Very easy to be a witness in the outermost parts of the earth and not be a witness in your own home.

When you are hurt by the words or actions of your wife or your husband, you must do what Jesus did, forgive. That is what it means to follow Jesus. Just coming to church and boasting that I believe I belong to a good church is absolute nonsense.

You are fooling yourself. One day when Christ comes back and you stand before him, you will get the surprise of your life when you discover that he says, I don't know you. Lord, but I sat in CFC.

He says, so what? I don't know you. You didn't follow me. You are not going to get any marks Perhaps the strongest truth being preached, but that doesn't make you a part of his body.

That you have to individually follow him in your daily life. That's your choice. It means that when people call you, they call Jesus Prince of Devils, Beelzebul, you know what he said? You spoke a word against me, it's forgiven.

And that's what I have to say too. If somebody speaks something evil about me, forgiven. You heard that so and so somewhere spoke evil against you, forgiven.

That is what it means to follow Jesus. It means to have the same attitude Jesus had towards those who hurt him. It's to have the same fearless, fearless attitude towards people who try to harm you.

You know Pilate once turned to Jesus and said to him in John chapter 19 when Jesus was standing before Pilate, Pilate tried to threaten him. You know like the way maybe you have experienced some human being trying to threaten you. Maybe your boss or your landlord or brother-in-law or anybody trying to threaten you.

Frighten you. Pilate tried to frighten Jesus saying John 19 verse 10. Pilate said to Jesus, you don't speak to me.

Don't you know that I have power, authority to release you or crucify you? How would you react if somebody threatened you like that in a court? A judge looks down on you and says, don't you know that I have a power to hang you tomorrow or release you? Jesus was not bothered. You know what he said? You have no authority over me unless my father gave it to you from above. Do you know that that's what you're supposed to say when somebody threatens you? Sorry.

You can try that with other people but not with me. I'm a servant of Almighty God. You have no power over me.

Except what my father gives you. If he doesn't give you power, you can't. Maybe he allowed you to harm me.

Father allowed people to kill Jesus and the father may allow people to kill me. That's okay. But they don't have any power over me except what the father gives them.

And if the father does not permit them to kill me, I will not be killed. Even if a hundred people gang up against me. You read that in the beginning of how people did try to kill him in Luke chapter 4. So many people, they took him out of the synagogue and they wanted to throw him down the cliff but they didn't succeed because the father didn't give them that power.

So this is what it means to follow Jesus. To be fearless. The Bible says, Cursed are those who lean upon the arm of flesh but blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord.

Now most Christians, when they are in difficulty, they lean upon the arm of flesh. They look around saying, which man can help me now? That's the mark of the children of Adam. A child of God looks up and says, God, you're going to help me here.

You may use men but I won't trust in men. God uses men to help us but we don't trust in them. We trust in God.

And the other thing I find is in Jesus' attitude to money especially. What should be our attitude as a church towards money? That's very very important because in Luke 16, in Luke 16 and verse 13, Luke 16, 13, this is a very very important verse for all who want to follow Jesus. No servant can serve two masters.

So now you test this out sometime. You go and ask any Christian, not those who have heard me in CFC but outside, ask any Christian in any denomination, who are the two masters in the world? I guarantee that

every one of those Christians will tell you God and Satan. But that's not what Jesus said.

Jesus said the two masters are not God and Satan. Jesus said the two masters are God and money. Money means property, wealth, everything.

You see there, no servant can serve two masters. He will hate one and love the other, hold on to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Mammon is another word for money, property, real estate, shares or whatever it is. Your earthly wealth is called mammon. He says you got a choice, serve God or serve for earthly wealth and money.

And we know that Jesus never served for money. He never promised a salary to any of his apostles. Where did this salary system come in Christendom that a pastor gets a salary? That's Babylon.

In Babylon they pay salaries. It's old covenant. In the old covenant, the old covenant, Israel was like a government with God as the head of the government.

And you know, in most governments, not in Dubai, but in other governments, they had to pay income tax. Because it is only with income tax, in India for example, that you can pay the government servants. The income tax is collected from all the people and that is how the government runs itself in all countries in the world.

Most countries anyway. They pay the government servants. Israel was exactly like that.

All the people in Israel had to bring 10%, not their money. They had no money those days. They were not working in offices and factories and all like us.

They were all farmers and shepherds. They would bring 10% of their grain, 10% of their cattle, sheep, etc. And give it to the Levites who were the government servants in Israel.

That was their income tax. Taith, which they call Taith, is actually income tax. God gave a standard income tax in the Old Testament called 10%.

You must pay income tax to pay the government servants who are the Levites who are taking care of the temple work. They were not allowed to have property. They were not allowed to do any other work.

They had to do, every one of them had to do temple work. The income tax paid their salary. That's Old Testament.

Today, who are the priests? Everybody is a priest. Do you know that you are a priest if you are born again? He has made us kings and priests. There is no such thing as income tax today.

Why? Because he is not our master today. He is a father. Does a father collect income tax from his children? No.

A master, a king can collect income tax. So all this Old Testament has been brought into the New Testament by covetous pastors. If you follow Jesus, you find certain things about him in relation to money.

Never once in his life did he ever ask people to give money. Never, never, never. Never once in his life did he pass an offering bag around saying I have preached to people now please put money into the offering bag.

Where do you see that? Even once. But today's Christendom, 99.9% of churches today do it. Where did they learn it from? Not from Jesus.

Paul did not pass a bag around after he preached, not even after he healed. Never. Where did they learn it from? Not from Jesus, not from Paul.

Where have all these habits come from? From a corruption of true Christianity. Now some of the corruption in true Christianity, you've already got light on and given up. For example, I was baptized as little children.

Why did you take baptism again? I was baptized when I was a baby. It wasn't really baptism, a christening because I grew up in an orthodox church. And my father took me to the priest and they gave me the name Zachariah and sprinkled some water and said okay, he's a Christian.

I rejected it when I was 21 years old. Many of you rejected it. Why? Because you rejected.

It was some Christian priest who sprinkled water on your head. Because you saw that is not taught in the New Testament. Where is it taught that we must pass a bag around in the New Testament? Why is it we have rejected one practice but accept another? We are willing to take water baptism but we are not willing to reject the offering bag.

That is the tragedy because they love money. Jesus did not. I remember, now you know, we have practiced the way Jesus did it for 40 years in cities among fairly rich people and in the poorest villages in India.

In all our 75 churches for 40 years we practiced never once passing a bag around without reason because Jesus didn't do it. That's the only reason. Reason is not we are more spiritual than others.

Not at all. Reason is we want to follow Jesus. Jesus never did it so we don't do it.

In his life he never ever why don't we tell people our financial need. We need this. We want to put up a building.

We need this. Why? Because Jesus never said it. We don't say it either.

Money is the alternate master to God. So if you recognize that God and money are the two masters and look around at all the churches in the world today tell me who are they following? Which master are they following? That's why we have been very strong in this area in CFC churches. As I said we don't claim to be better than any church but we say if we see that Jesus did it we want to do it that way.

In his life we can't claim to follow the ministry of Jesus of walking on the water. I have never met anybody in my life who can walk on water. I have never met anybody in my life who can feed 5000 people with 5 loaves of bread.

That is ministry. And if that is what Jesus meant by following then we have to say nobody is following Jesus. But that's not what he meant.

He meant that we must follow him in his life. But I have met lots of people in our churches who forgive those who hurt them who have no bitterness against anybody who never take money never ask for money never tell people about their needs. I have seen lots of people like that.

In their life I have seen many people who follow in Jesus' footsteps who do good and do it secretly just like Jesus said don't let anybody know don't let your left hand know what your right hand does. You are part of the body of Jesus Christ. You personally forget about the rest of the church you individually must really be gripped by saying Lord as I read the gospels I want to see how you lived and I want to live exactly like that.

I won't reach there in one day. I am running a race Jesus is far ahead of me but I am running the same race. It is something like let's say climbing Mount Everest which is 10,000 meters we can say that Jesus reached the top.

Paul saw the footsteps of Jesus going up to that mountain and he is walking. Paul did not reach 10,000 meters maybe he reached 5,000 meters. Now I am following Paul as he followed Christ maybe I have reached 500 meters still a long way to 10,000 meters but I am following in the same path.

Think of people climbing Mount Everest in the snow you see the footsteps you see the footsteps of Jesus going all the way to the top and then you see the footsteps of Paul who is putting his feet into the footsteps of Jesus he hasn't reached all the way to the top he is part of the way and then you and I can see the footsteps of Paul and Christ and say okay we are also following. Following does not mean we have reached the top. We are going in the same direction and if we continue like that we will reach the top.

That means we live by the same principles that Jesus lived by.

Forgiveness goodness love humility no boasting a right attitude to money no jealousy no competition even if you can't heal the sick or do miracles don't worry even if you can't preach it doesn't matter you can't play any musical instruments it doesn't matter we don't read about Jesus playing musical instruments don't think of ministry think of life the principles by which Jesus lived forgiving everybody who hurt you not 99% you know for example the Bible teaches certain things about okay let's talk about money giving in the New Testament are we supposed to give money of course but how does God want us to give see 2nd Corinthians in chapter 9 and verse 7 this tells us this is a clear verse that tells us how we must give let each one do just as he has decided in his heart 2nd Corinthians 9

verse 7 not grudgingly or under compulsion did you hear that nobody gives anything to God grudgingly oh I have to give this to God no because I don't want it if that's the attitude with which you're giving brother keep it go and buy something for your children with it don't give it to God because he does not want anything given grudgingly and not under compulsion don't give because some preacher said that's the last person you should give money to because God says not under compulsion how many Christian churches are practicing this you tell me cheerfully God loves a cheerful giver cheerful giver so in the Old Testament it was how much you gave 10% in the New Testament it is how you gave how amount is not important how you gave and so when we look at it like that there are certain rules

Jesus said about giving money one it must be cheerfully given the other Jesus said in Matthew chapter 6 Matthew 6 and verse 3 when you give don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so if you think of the body of Christ what it means is another member of the body of Christ should not know what you are doing it must be given secretly so we are understanding certain principles of giving money to God one cheerfully second secretly another principle Jesus said in Matthew 5 verse 24 when you come with your offering and there you remember that your brother has got something against you don't give your offering don't give it you are just going to put your money in the offering box and you suddenly remember somebody has got something against you put it back into your pocket says

go first and settle matters with your brother then come and put the money in the box these are certain principles but the Old Testament does not like that you have fought with your brother you have got to pay your tithe do you see how most Christian churches today are following the Old Testament and you cannot follow the Old Testament and be a New Testament church that's impossible there is something else that Jesus said about giving Matthew 22 another principle about giving verse 21 render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's here is another principle on giving now Caesar represents another human being or the government both so let's take the government don't cheat the government of taxes and give that money to God God says I don't want it I don't

want money which is given out of cheating it doesn't apply to you here because you don't pay taxes but wherever they do the other thing is look at Caesar as a human being any human being you borrowed money from somebody now should you put money in the offering box no because you are putting somebody else's money there supposing that fellow whom I borrowed from knows that I am putting money in the offering box he will say hey listen before you give to God give me back my money you are putting my money into that box that's not your money don't you think that's righteous and supposing the Lord comes and you still owe that fellow money he will have every right to tell the Lord Lord you can't take him he's got to return my money first before you take him to heaven don't you think so render to

Caesar first then give to God I have often asked people this question if you owe money to a man and you want to give to God which should you do first most people say God first I say no man first that's what he said he didn't say first give to God he said first give back to Caesar what belongs to him you borrow money from somebody you cannot give that money to God because you are giving his money not your money which church teaches this we do these are certain principles the words of Jesus always Mark chapter 7 we are talking about being the body of Christ following in Jesus' footsteps Mark chapter 7 and verse 10 this is Jesus quoting Moses Moses said and that is a principle that applies even today honor your father and mother it is quoted in Ephesians 6 it's a New Testament principle also

honor your father and mother and if somebody speaks evil of father and mother in the Old Testament they have to kill him do you know that a child who spoke evil of father and mother had to be killed in the Old Testament you read that Jesus saying that but you say if a man's father and mother is in financial need ok old father and mother they have retired they don't have enough money to take care of themselves because they spent their money educating their children and the children are well off now and your father and mother are in need and you don't give money to them to help them for their financial need you say anything I could have given to you I've given to God verse 11 did you hear that what I could have given to you to help you to have to pay your rent and to take care of your food

and to have a blanket to cover yourself I'm sorry dad and mom I can't give it to you because I've given it to God such a holy man Jesus said you don't permit him to do anything for his father and mother because he's given that money to God you're cancelling the word of God with your tradition so what was he saying that if your father and mother are in need don't give to God take care of your parents which preacher preaches this I preached it all my life because I'm preaching what Jesus did that's what I'm trying to say most Christian churches do not preach what Jesus taught if you come to our CFC building in Bangalore we don't take an offering bag we've never done that for 40 years we keep an offering box because we read Jesus sat next to the offering box in Mark chapter 12 he saw the

widow put in two coins so we believe in an offering box anybody can give secretly, cheerfully but on top of the offering box it is with five conditions number one are you born again?

God will not accept money from those who are not his children you know that is in the Bible in case you don't know it see the third epistle of John third epistle of John verse 7 he's talking about full-time workers full-time workers verse 7 who went out preaching for the sake of the name of Jesus accepting nothing from the non-Christians accepting zero from unbelievers we've sometimes had people who are nominal Christians not born again send a donation to CFC Bangalore we return it we say dear sir we cannot accept this if you are not born again some of them get offended you can be offended but we have to obey the word of God accepting nothing from non-Christians sometimes if we can't return it we buy some books with the same amount of money and give them a gift so that we don't touch that

money we cannot take money from a non-Christian and use it for God's work it's against the word of God so that's the first notice we have put on top of our offering box are you born again? second do you have a grudge does somebody have a grudge against you? don't give third do you owe Caesar or anybody some money? don't give fourth does your father or mother or your children need help financially? don't give fifth are you giving in order to get some reward from God? you know like some people preach if you give tithe God will reward you are you doing business with God? like you give money in the bank for interest you give money to the bank bank will give you 7% more or 5% more don't give like that don't give in order to get a reward God is not a businessman so we say if you fulfill these

conditions then I remember once I was preaching in a Pentecostal church he was a God fearing man that pastor and he said brother Zach I agree with everything you say except this why do you preach so much against all these rules about giving don't give, don't give he says with all these conditions nobody will give anything as it is they give so little after hearing you they'll give nothing I said and we have never asked anybody for 1 cent till today and we have conferences for 38 years at least where we have given food accommodation freely to people in the poorest villages in India and in cities and we have built meeting halls all without asking people for money all without sending reports to America or anywhere else to prove that even in a poor country like India it is okay can you prove

it of course we have proved it for years it's because of unbelief that people depend more upon men than upon God see God taught me this through stages I left my job in the Navy 50 years ago exactly 50 years ago I was not married then and the Lord told me when I left my job even when you have nothing give people the impression that you have plenty then nobody will give you money like some beggar you know that most people give to full time workers like beggars they give some money oh this poor man this beggar give him some money this poor full time worker give him some money and the Lord said my servants are not beggars that's what he told me so give people the impression that you have plenty that's what I did I was single those days I said Lord all my life I will follow this I will never

in my life give anybody the impression that I am in need and even when I had nothing I gave people the impression I had plenty so I proved it in my life and God took care of me then I got married and I said Lord I will not go and preach in rich churches I preach among villagers and I preach among students can God take care of our need yes if you can live simply if you want to live in grand style impossible but if you are willing to live simply like Jesus lived possible you don't have to buy certain things if you can't afford it my wife and I decided when we got married for 48 years we have never been in debt for one rupee to any human being in the beginning we couldn't afford many things we didn't buy them we didn't buy clothes we just wore the same old clothes repaired it and stitched it

repaired it and stitched it we didn't have the money to buy new clothes fine the same thing for our children we didn't have money teach your children simplicity and principles of Jesus why is it so many children of

parents who got such a lot of money where are those children today wayward following the world and the parents are wondering why because you have not taught them Christian values from childhood you got plenty of money just give it to them we proved it in our work we proved it in our family now I said I am going to prove it in a church I proved it in my life that we can trust God for our financial needs I proved it in my family now I am going to prove it in a church so that was the third stage when we started a little meeting in our home 40 years ago in our house I said now we

are going to prove it in our church that we will never take an offering we will just keep a box and there are so many needs we used to have conferences free and we found little by little, even though we have a small church, God provided our need.

We needed a building because the number of people increased.

God provided us, we never asked anybody for money. As the offerings increased, we could buy a lamp, we could put up a building. I proved it in a church, stage four, sorry, yeah, in my life, in my family and then in my church, stage three.

But then I said, Bangalore is a rich city, so it's easy to trust God in Bangalore because people earn a lot of money, they afforded me an offering, but now, number four, I want to prove it in the poorest villages in India, that there also it will work. So we went into the villages, to the poorest villages in India, in two villages where there were no churches for 2,000 years, and said, I want to prove that there also God is the same as he was in the days of the apostles. And we proved even there, with poor people, some of those people, the offering they used to bring to the church were one chicken, few potatoes, this was their offering, they were farmers, some rice, they needed money to give.

And God met our need. I proved it again and again in all these four areas, that's what gives me such confidence today to say, God is a living God. If you trust him, you will experience miracles in your life.

But you have to decide, I will not serve money. I will not live here to make money. I'm going to live here to glorify God.

Your life will change tremendously if you do that. See it says in the last days, 2nd Timothy chapter 3, what is going to happen in the last days? A lot of people talk about Israel, there's going to be wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines. These are the things most people think about.

Well, let me tell you something else. 2nd Timothy 3, in the last days, difficult times will come. Difficult in what way? Not persecution.

That is another type of difficulty. Here it says the difficulty will be that men will be lovers of self and lovers of money. Did you hear that? Lovers of self and lovers of money, yet, verse 5, holding to a form of godliness without its power.

So, this is, I mean, the world is full of people who love themselves and love money. But what he's saying is, in the last days, it'll be very difficult, the living Bible says it'll be very difficult to be a Christian because there'll be now Christians who love themselves and love money, but still pretending to be wholehearted Christians. We find lots and lots of people like that today, who claim to be wholehearted Christians, but in their heart, they are lovers of money, therefore, it's going to be very difficult to be a Christian in the last days.

Have you ever thought of that? Not because of persecution from outside, but because in the church are going to be people who pretend to be very wholehearted, but God sees their hearts are lovers of money, and that's why they don't progress in their Christian life. They never come to a godly life of overcoming sin, and they are never able to build the body of Christ. So Paul warns Timothy, he says in 1 Timothy 6, listen to this, 1 Timothy 6, verse 8, learn to be content.

1 Timothy 6, verse 8, learn to be content if you've got food, clothing, and a shelter over your head, because if your aim is to get rich, now I'm reading the Bible, this is not Zak Poonen's opinion, it's the Holy Spirit is saying, if your aim in life is to get rich, verse 9, number one, you'll fall into temptation. Number two, you'll fall into a trap. Number three, you'll fall into many foolish desires.

Number four, you'll fall into many harmful desires. Number five, this will plunge you into ruin. Number six, this will plunge you into destruction.

Number seven, the love of money, it'll lead you to all sorts of evil. And number eight, you will wander away from the faith. No, you'll still come to church, but you won't have a living faith.

Number nine, you will pierce yourself with many sorrows. Do you believe it? You believe these nine things can happen to any Christian whose aim in life is just to make more and more money. There's no partiality with God.

We must earn our living, but if that becomes your item, these nine things can happen to you. God is not against your earning money. I'm not saying that if you're poor, you're godly.

I don't believe that. We have umpteen thousands of poor beggars in India, Bangalore itself. None of them are godly.

So that itself proves that poor people are not godly. And I've seen rich people who are godly. So it's not a question of what your income is, what your salary is, whether you have a house of your own, what is your bank account, what is your savings.

It's got nothing to do with these things. It's got to do with what is your attitude towards money. Is your aim in life to become rich? Do you love it? Then these nine things will happen to you.

So it's not a question of looking at a rich person and saying he loves money and looking at a poor person and saying he doesn't love money. No. Because God sees the heart.

So what I'm trying to say is, to be the body of Jesus Christ means to have the same principles that Jesus had in his life. Now Jesus happened to be born to a poor family. Joseph was not a millionaire.

But let's suppose that Jesus was born in a millionaire's family. Then he'd have had a very comfortable upbringing. That would not have been a sin.

That would not have been a sin if Jesus' mother got him some expensive clothes. No, that's not a sin. It's a question of your attitude towards it.

It's not what you have, but your attitude towards what you have. That's what I'm trying to emphasize. Because so many people misunderstand this matter of love of money.

They think every rich man is a lover of money or anyone who goes to the Gulf is a lover of money and anyone who stays in India is not a lover of money. This is absolute nonsense. I know lots of people who live in India who are lovers of money.

You don't have to go to the Gulf to love money. You don't have to go to America to love money. It's in the heart.

You can be in the poorest country in the world and love money. You can live in the richest country in the world and not love money. You've got to understand what I'm trying to say.

The attitude that Jesus had towards all these things. Lord, I want to be a living part of the body of Jesus Christ. As I said, money is just one area.

Your attitude towards people who hurt you. I mentioned that earlier. People who call you the devil.

People who try to harm you. People who hurt you. Your attitude towards poor, sinful people.

Not that you don't look down, but you don't look down upon them. Like the Pharisee said, Lord, I thank you. I'm not like other men.

I'm not like these people out there. Do you know that that attitude can be found in you? For example, my wife and I don't wear any earrings or gold at all. We don't believe in it.

But if I say, Lord, Lord, I thank you. That we don't wear any ornaments. We're not like those people who wear ornaments.

Do you know that I've become a Pharisee? Very easy. And the Christian world is full of people who are like that. In certain churches, they emphasize very strongly that you must not wear any earrings or jewelry.

But they don't realize that that's fine. If you don't want to wear it, that's fine. Like I said, my wife and I have never used it.

But if we thereby say, Lord, I thank you. I'm not like people in that church who wear a lot of jewelry. Then you have become evil.

That can happen right in this church. Maybe some of you don't wear jewelry. But inwardly, you look down on somebody who does.

Then you're the Pharisee, not them. Jesus said that sinner went home justified. But this person who compared himself with another was condemned.

Do you know that many people who don't wear jewelry are condemned? And some people who wear it are not condemned. Because it's not a question of jewelry. It's a question of attitude.

Now my wife and I don't wear it out of conviction. But some people may not have conviction on that. For example, in our church, we encourage sisters to wail their heads.

Because the Bible says that a woman must wail her head. But we have some sisters who don't wail their head. I don't judge them.

I don't say, Lord, we thank you. We've got more light than those sisters who don't wail their heads. Maybe they don't have light.

Don't look down on them. It's very easy to do something yourself. And then judge another person for not doing it.

I've seen this, for example. I've seen this with some sisters who don't wear jewelry. And they look down on some poor sister who's wearing an 800 rupee earring.

800 rupees artificial gold earring. While they themselves are wearing a 15,000 rupees saree. And they think, I'm not wearing earrings.

Absolute hypocrisy. They've got bathroom fittings that cost 25,000 rupees. They don't even see it.

They're judging a poor sister for wearing an 800 rupee earring. This is the type of hypocrisy that is going on in Christendom today. I'm just warning you.

The moment you look down on somebody, you're not following Jesus. If you have a conviction, keep it. I'm not asking you to be like them.

Keep it, but don't look down on somebody who does not see it the same way as you do. Even for example, baptism. I believe there's only one type of baptism.

You must be born again and baptized. But I know some believers who don't have light on it. In Mark Thoma Church or CSI, there's some really God-fearing people who are really baptized as children.

I don't look down on them. Okay, they don't have light on it. Why should I judge them? I'm not going to follow them.

I follow what the Lord has shown me. But I don't look down on them and judge them. I can't work with them, because I can't work with those who baptize children.

But I don't despise them. I'm just trying to protect you from having attitudes that are completely contrary to Christ. Very easy, my brothers and sisters.

Very easy. And I find a lot of this in Kerala particularly. Looking down on others who don't have all these convictions.

We have a conviction. Hold it to yourself before God. I find another habit that is very common among Christians.

And that is what I call curiosity. To find out things about others. Asking questions.

To find out this information and that information and the other information about other people. For what purpose? I was recently saying this in Bangalore in our church. I said, we have some older sisters.

Who go around asking younger sisters all types of curious questions. What for? As soon as somebody is married, within one month they'll go and say, have you become pregnant? What for? This is called curiosity. Can you imagine Jesus going to someone who was married one month ago and saying, Sister, have you become pregnant? Can you imagine Jesus asking such a question? The girl was married only last month.

Have you become pregnant, sister? Is this Jesus or is it the devil? Who are you following? Curiosity. Kerala is full of it. Curious about this and that.

How much are you earning? How much salary are you earning? How much is your husband earning? What for? Only for jealousy or for pride. Do you see how so many people who talk about New Testament pattern don't have anything of the life of Christ. They imagine because they come to CFC, oh, we are in such a church, we don't baptize children, we don't have pastors, we have elders.

But what about all this? We have curiosity. That's worse. I'd rather have pastors than have curiosity.

Any day. Without a doubt. Let me have a pastor but no curiosity.

You know, for example, there are people who despise some sister who wears a little lipstick. My wife has never worn lipstick in her life. And I'll never buy it either.

But they despise someone who wears lipstick or a little do up their face or perfume or powder or whatever it is. Or some sister who wears jeans, oh, terrible. So I once said in our church, I said, give me a sister who wears jeans, who's got short hair cut up to the shoulder, who wears lipstick, but who never gossips, who's not curious, who's generous, who helps the poor, who prays for the church, but she wears jeans and she's got short hair and she wears lipstick and mascara also.

But she prays, she loves people, she's humble, she doesn't compare herself to anybody. Give me ten people like that rather than these holy people who cover their heads and gossip at home, don't submit to their husbands at home, who backbite and are curious about this and curious about that. Any day, give me one of those other people who wears jeans and mascara and lipstick and all, who are godly.

Man looks on the outward appearance, God looks at the heart. Of course, you can be modest on the outside and have these qualities, but if it's a choice, any day, I would choose a sister who's got godly values instead of this outward superficial religiosity. What does it mean to be like Jesus? We need to be great.

My brothers and sisters, let us have the values of Jesus Christ as we seek to go forward in the Christian life. The time is up. Thank you for listening.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, help us to really judge ourselves and nobody else. We're not called here to judge others.

You are the judge of all men. Help us to understand the principles of Jesus and seek to follow him in our daily life, to walk the way he walked in humility. Lord Jesus, you said when you were on earth, I judge no man.

We want to walk like that. We want to judge ourselves and seek to see where we can follow you better. Bless this church, make it a living example.

The principles by which you lived on this earth. Thank you. In Jesus' name.

Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/qq1pyVHSHzA.mp4>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/living-by-christs-principles/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net