

# Living For God's Highest Always

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of studying the Bible with discernment, distinguishing between historical sections and teaching sections. It warns against false doctrines and the danger of picking and choosing teachings. The speaker highlights the need for consistency in studying Scripture, seeking truth, and being saved from sin. The sermon encourages a deep love for the truth, a desire to be saved from all known sin, and a commitment to live a life that counts for eternity.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 11:28, Psalm 139:23, 1 Corinthians 6:12, Romans 8:6, Revelation 3:11, Isaiah 55:8

**Topics:** "Discernment in Scripture", "Commitment to Truth"

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## Description

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## Transcript

When we study the Bible, basically, except for a few passages like the Psalms, the Bible is basically either history or teaching. Almost every book, every chapter of every book is either a history or teaching. And the Old Testament is mostly the history of Israel, and in the Gospels is the history of Jesus' life, and Acts is the history of the church.

And then you come to the Epistles, which is teaching, and then in Revelation it's teaching again concerning the future. A very important principle of all Bible study is that you never try to get a doctrine from the teaching sections of Scripture. A lot of false doctrines have come that way, and they've led a lot of people astray.

The history sections of Scripture, however, are very important for us to learn lessons from the failures and the good qualities of God's people, the failures of God's people. For example, if you get a doctrine out of... let's take something that is very commonly spoken among the Pentecostals, the speaking in tongues. There's so much confusion in Christendom concerning this doctrine.

It all depends on where you get your doctrine from. We must be consistent. You can't pick and choose.

If you pick and choose what you like, God himself will deceive you and allow you to go astray. We must be consistent in our study of the Scriptures. So, speaking in tongues is mentioned, Mark 16, Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 2, Chapter 10, Chapter 19, and then in the New Testament in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 12 and Chapter 14.

So if you want to get a doctrine from the teaching of the Apostles, you must go to 1 Corinthians 12 and 1 Corinthians 14. If you go to the Acts of the Apostles for doctrine, you'll see in Acts 2-4, they all spoke in tongues, and that's the... they were filled with the Spirit and they all spoke in tongues. Now, that is the verse from which the Pentecostals get that teaching, but they're picking and choosing.

They're not consistent. They're not honest. Because, here's another teaching, they all spoke in tongues, and then verse 44, the same chapter, Acts 2-44, they all had everything in common.

Nobody had a private bank account. Everybody pooled all their finances, and they lived together. I don't see people doing that.

I know the Hutterites do that, but then the Hutterites are, again, speaking in tongues. So you find that there's inconsistency everywhere. They pick one... the Pentecostals pick Acts 2-4 and the Hutterites pick Acts 2-44, but neither of them will take both.

So once we adopt that pick-and-choose method, God Himself will allow you to go astray. And I believe God has allowed a lot of these people to go astray. We must be honest, and we must be consistent.

Because not only that, if you go to the Acts of the Apostles for doctrine, you must also see that Paul circumcised Timothy. So everybody must be circumcised. That's in the Acts of the Apostles, and that's in Acts 16.

And later on, you read that Paul went and shaved his head in Acts 21, and everybody must do that. Or absurd things like Paul shouted at the high priest. Where do we draw the line on what to accept and what not to accept? Whereas when you come to the teaching sections of Scripture, it is very clear.

In 1 Corinthians 12, to one is given the gift of speaking in tongues, to another the gift of healing, to another the word of knowledge, in 1 Corinthians 12, verse 8 onwards. And then at the end of that same chapter, 1 Corinthians 12, he says in verse 29 and 30, are all apostles? No. Are all prophets? No.

Do all have the gift of healing? No. Then do all speak in tongues? No. Do all interpret? No.

So if you go to the teaching sections of Scripture, there's absolutely no confusion. But if you try to get a doctrine from the Acts of the Apostles, you get into confusion. Same thing with the teaching sections of the Gospels and the historical sections of the Gospels.

For example, the teaching section of the Gospels is very clear what Jesus taught. The Sermon on the Mount, especially, Matthew 5, 6, and 7, we got to obey that literally. But people don't take it, unfortunately.

What do they take? They take verses like, Jesus healed everybody, so we must go on healing the sick. Now that is history, it's not teaching. Jesus did not say you must go and heal everybody.

And we must see the difference between history and doctrine. What Jesus taught, the conditions of discipleship, Luke 14, and all his teaching in Luke, in John 14, 15, 16, 17, that's teaching. So beware of the danger of trying to get a doctrine out of the historical section of Scripture.

Jesus fasted 40 days. I don't find Pentecostal teaching that. They will teach that.

They claim to heal everybody, but hardly anybody is healed in their meetings. So I'm just saying, we have to be very honest with Scripture, otherwise we'll get deceived. The Bible says a very terrifying verse in 2 Thessalonians 2. I always say this is the scariest verse in the New Testament.

The scariest. 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 11, is the only verse in the whole Bible where it says God himself will deceive people. God himself will deceive people.

He will send a deluding influence, 2 Thessalonians 2, 11, because of two reasons. He'll allow them to believe what is false. It's a scary verse.

If God Almighty is going to allow some people to believe what is false, 2 Thessalonians 2, 11, what hope is there for us? If God himself is going to send a deceiving influence upon us, what hope is there for us? The devil is a deceiver. Our flesh is full of deceitful lusts. The Bible says the heart is deceitful above all things, Jeremiah 17.

The heart, the flesh, the devil. Okay, I can tackle all that if God is on my side. But if God himself sends a deluding influence, then I'm finished.

I've been deceived all my life and think I'm a spiritual person when I'm not. I can think I'm born again when I'm not. I can think I'm filled with the Spirit when I'm not.

How to escape this deception? Whom does God deceive? 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 10, the previous verse. Those who do not love the truth and those who don't want to be saved, I need only two qualifications to prevent God from ever deluding me or deceiving me or allowing me to believe what is false. One, I must love the truth.

And that means when God shows me something in my heart which I know is right, I must acknowledge it. Not try to justify myself like Adam, then I go astray. The Lord convicts me about something, acknowledge it to God.

If it is in a relationship with somebody else that God says you were wrong, acknowledge it. If God says that was wrong the way you spoke to your wife just now, quote, you don't acknowledge it immediately. I tell you in Jesus' name, you'll be deceived pretty soon.

And you keep on going that way, you're a candidate for total deception. B, love the truth about yourself when God says something. You have an argument with a brother and God tells you, you were rude and you were completely wrong.

Acknowledge it. But if you try to justify yourself, you're a prime candidate for God to deceive you. So love the truth about yourself.

Whenever God shows it to you, maybe God speaks to you through another brother or in a meeting, and you suddenly hear something where God's speaking to you and saying something about yourself, acknowledge it. Some wrong attitude you have towards someone, acknowledge it. Somebody you have not really forgiven because you rejoiced at his misfortune or you were unhappy when something good happened to him, that person who did harm to you.

Those are God's ways of saying to you, you have not forgiven that person because you rejoiced at his misfortune and you were delighted when something bad happened to him. Acknowledge it. Love the truth.

Lord, I'm sorry. That is my attitude towards that person because he did so much harm to me so many years ago or somewhere, and I was very happy when something bad happened to him. Lord, forgive me.

I love the truth about myself. I want to be like Jesus. I want to have a heart that's got nothing in it but love, the divine love of God, not the superficial type of love that the world has, but the love of God.

And that's the first area, I must love the truth. The second is about myself. The second area I must love the truth is the word of God.

For example, if I see something in the word of God, like something I shared with you just now, that why do you take speaking in tongues as for everybody but not sharing everything in common or circumcising people? It's all in the Acts of the Apostles. Why do you pick and choose or shaving your head? Why do you pick something and leave out something else? Love the truth. You're not consistent.

And if you realize that that's because you're going to the Acts of the Apostles for doctrine and you shouldn't be going there for doctrine, you should be going there to learn the lessons of history. So, when I love the truth and God shows me something from the word of God, which is contrary to what I've believed all my life. If I love the truth and I accept God's word, he will lead me on to greater things.

It's like saying, if you pass your examinations in the first grade, God leads you to the second grade. He's all the time testing us whether I love the truth. Where I see something in scripture completely contrary to what I've always believed, I throw away what I always believed and say, Lord, I accept your word.

I want to tell you honestly, that's the policy I have followed for 60 years of my Christian life. And the result is I've discovered amazing things in scripture, which I've never read any book and never heard in any sermon. And I've been able to share that with many people.

So, one fundamental principle, where I see something in scripture against what I believe. For example, I started out born in a church which preached infant baptism. I was baptized as a child.

And then when I was 19 and a half, I was born again. And people told me, you must be baptized. And some people said, no, don't get baptized because then you get a chance to witness to the others.

And I studied the scriptures, the New Testament. And I found there was not a single case of child baptism in the entire New Testament. And every person who was baptized was a believer.

But then I heard these arguments of, don't get thrown out of that church and stay in that church and be a witness there. And I didn't get baptized for one and a half years. And all those one and a half years, whenever I knelt down to pray, God said, you're not listening to me.

Why should I listen to you? And I did not grow spiritually at all in those one and a half years. Finally, I got fed up. And I said, I don't care which church throws me out.

I'm going to obey the word of God. And immediately, it was like a rocket that was tied down to the ground suddenly shooting out. My life took off from that moment.

And two years thereafter, God led me further to baptism in the Holy Spirit. And I was anointed. And I, who hardly knew the scriptures, got boldness to preach the word of God.

And in two and a half years after my baptism, I was preaching to 5,000 people at conferences because I decided to love the truth. I was in the church those days. I took baptism.

But I was in a church that did not believe in the baptism in the Holy Spirit. They said, that is all finished. When you're born again, you're baptized in the Holy Spirit.

But I found a lack of power in my life. I wanted to be honest. I loved the truth.

I did not have power in my life. And I didn't want to twist scripture to suit my convenience. So I began to seek the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

And I went to one place where they were talking about it, but it didn't seem consistent with scripture. So I rejected that church. That was a Pentecostal church.

They told me to repeat something. I said, no, I'm not going to repeat anything. If it comes to me, it must come from heaven.

And consistently, because I loved the truth, I pulled out from different, different churches. I said, Lord, I want to be where people take the whole scripture and nothing more and nothing less. So when it comes to the scripture, when it comes to our own life, we love the truth.

And the second thing here in 2 Thessalonians 2 is to be saved. They did not love the truth. They did not want to be saved.

That's why God deceived them. What does it mean to be saved? To be saved from sin. Not to be forgiven.

I knew forgiveness. But to be saved from sin. If I don't have a passionate desire to be saved from all sin, all that I know to be unchrist-like in my life, I'm a prime candidate for deception.

And I want to say that to all of you, however spiritual you think you are, if you know there's some thing that in your life you know it is sin, the Holy Spirit's convicted you, it is sin, that is not something you can do in fellowship with Jesus Christ. And you try and find some excuse for it, you are a prime candidate for deception. God himself will allow you to believe what is false.

So it's very important that we love the truth and long to be saved from all known sin. That's how we must approach the scriptures. Distinguish between, as I said, between historical sections and teaching sections.

And go to the teaching sections to get our doctrine. But go to the historical sections to learn lessons. There are historical parts even in the epistles.

So when you go to the Old Testament, there are history there that we can learn. We are not under the Old Covenant. But the way God deals with people, for example, I see in the Old Testament, if you read all the prophets, you find God detests idolatry.

He punished the Israelites ruthlessly for worshiping idols more than anything else. And then the other thing he punished the Israelites for severely was for adultery. So I learned something.

Sexual sin is very, very serious in God's eyes. It's not something you can take lightly. You can't play the fool with your eyes and your thoughts in this area.

Because God hates it. He detests it. I got that from the Old Testament.

If I read the prophets, it's there. And secondly, God detests idolatry. An idol is, you know, they worship Baal or something else as God.

And here the real God detests these Israelites for putting something else in their hearts in place of Him. So an idol is anything that takes the place of God in your heart. In most believers' cases, it is money.

In some cases, it is sinful pleasure. In some cases, it is food, gluttony. You know, food can be an idol.

Money can be an idol. Sinful pleasure can be an idol. Here, for example, Philippians chapter 3, let me read to you.

It says in verse Philippians 3, 19, some people that God is their stomach. Their appetite is their God. It's written in Scripture.

I don't know whether you've noticed it. Philippians 3, 19. And such people, it says in verse 18, are enemies of the cross of Christ.

A person who worships his appetite is an enemy of the cross of Christ. Philippians 3, 18 and 19. Do you love the truth? Jesus, they accused Him of being a glutton because He ate whatever there was.

And He would eat to satisfy His hunger. But He was also a person who could fast even for 40 days if needed. There was a balance in Jesus' life.

He was not an ascetic who was saying, no, I will always fast. No. At the same time, He was not one who would fast when needed.

But He was not one who would just keep on eating endlessly. He ate to live, not like many today who live to eat. So we don't think much of loving food as a sort of idolatry.

It is. Loving money is another form of idolatry. And if I really want to be totally available for God, I must be free from worship of these things.

You can use these things, but not worship these things. Let me show you another verse in 2 Corinthians. I'm sorry, 1 Corinthians in chapter 6. People can say when they hear something like this, oh brother, everything is lawful for me.

What's wrong in my eating a little more, enjoying myself, having a good meal? Nothing wrong. Absolutely nothing wrong. So let me read to you.

1 Corinthians 6 verse 12. Paul says, all things are lawful. Now he's not talking about sinful things.

Paul had already been freed from sinful things. But among the non-sinful things, everything is lawful for me, Paul says. There are many things I can do.

Jesus could have gone to Rome if he wanted for a holiday. Why not? Was it unlawful to visit Rome for a holiday? Was it unlawful for Jesus to ask for money to get a chariot to travel from Jerusalem to Galilee?

He had to do it so frequently instead of walking for three days to get there. Nothing unlawful about it.

He's serving God. But he was very careful. He wouldn't allow Judas Iscariot to make a proclamation, let's get a chariot for the master.

He would have told him to keep quiet. All things are lawful. But all things are not profitable.

So I see there are two types of Christians. Born again Christians. Those who say, if it's lawful, I can do it.

I don't care what others say. Fine. You'll be a carnal Christian all your life.

You may be born again, but you'll be useless to God. I can guarantee that. Because your life's motto is, anything that's lawful, I'll do.

You're not a sinner doing unlawful things. No, you're better than them. But who is a spiritual person? The person who says, out of 100 lawful things, I'm going to take 25 that are profitable and do only those.

That person's life will count for God. That's the person who, when he meets the Lord face-to-face on the final day, will have no regret over the way he lived. I'm convinced that many, many believers are going to have tremendous regret over the way they lived their lives, the way they spent their time, the way they spent their money, and what they lived for, what their goal in life was.

And one reason was, they chose the minimum necessary to go to heaven. The minimum necessary to please God. That was not Jesus' attitude.

He didn't go to the Father and say, Father, what's the minimum I have to do on this earth? No. His attitude to the Father was, what is the maximum I can do in the 33 years that you give me on this earth? There are believers like that today, who say, what is the minimum number of meetings I have to attend in the church? And what is the minimum I have to do here? What's the minimum I have to give to God? And what is the minimum amount of time I must read the Bible? How much must I know the Bible? What is the minimum? I want to say without hesitation, these are Christians that are absolutely useless to God. They warm the pews and the chairs in the church every Sunday, but they don't accomplish anything for God.

Their lives are, as far as God's concerned, their life is a dead loss. In fact, they're like paralyzed hands in the body of Christ that are a drag and a weight upon the body. God wants every member of his church to be effective and useful and powerful and strong.

Every brother, every sister. And we must train our children that way too, from the time that they're young. But this is the way to do it.

Among the hundred things that are lawful, I've got to select the things that are profitable. And say, Lord, I've got only one life to live. I want to spend my life doing the things that are going to count for eternity.

Not just for me to become spiritual, but for me to fulfill the will of God. Which means serving others too. And that will involve a lot of sacrifice.

A lot of people think in terms of serving others in the church or being a blessing to others. They say, what is the minimum I have to do? What is the minimum I have to do to serve others? Those are the ones who are like paralyzed members of the body who are a weight in the body of Christ. Useless to God and useless to man.

So think of this verse. Paul says, all things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. One more thing.

1 Corinthians 6.12 again. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything. Food is lawful.

For example, that's the next thing he says in the very next verse. He talks about food. All things are lawful for me, food is lawful, but I won't be mastered by it.

He says in the next verse, food is for the stomach. The stomach is for food, but one day God is going to destroy both of them. And sex, that's also part of the body.

But the body is for the Lord. He talks about sexual sin there also in verse 13. Food and sex, the two strong desires in the human body are what he refers to in verse 13.

Lawful, sex is lawful in marriage, completely unlawful outside it. The body is for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. That's an amazing verse.

I have used that verse, to tell you honestly, many times when I'm sick with something or the other. And that's happened many times in these years. I've said, Lord, according to 1 Corinthians 6.13, my body is yours.

I have no doubt about it in my mind. I never want to use my body for myself. To indulge in sin, or to do something which I know is displeasing to you.

Or take my body and take it to a place where God doesn't want me to go. Even if it's not sinful, does God want me to go there? This body is for the Lord, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, right through my life. So I say, Lord, as far as I know, I can honestly say that it's true in my life, since many years.

Therefore, if my body is for the Lord, the Lord is for my body, according to that verse. So now, Lord, I'm a bit sick. It says here, you're for my body, better do something about it.

This body is for you, and you are for my body. And then further down about the body, it says, the Holy Spirit, your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. I've got two verses now.

The Lord is for my body, and my body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Now, if your church building is in disrepair, with the windows broken down, or the door doesn't shut properly, you do something about it. I don't think you'll wait one day.

You'll fix it. Because it's the house of the Lord. And I say, Lord, that church building is not the house of the Lord.

This body is the house of the Lord. This is the temple. Something's not working, please fix it.

It's a temple of the Holy Spirit. I want it to be fit to serve you. It's amazing what God can do.

But it begins with, the body is for the Lord. Don't jump into the Lord is for the body. I've seen numerous people who claim healing from the Lord.

I say, you haven't fulfilled the conditions. You want the Lord for your body, but your body is not for the Lord. Your body you use for yourself, to indulge so many desires.

Not sinful desires, lawful desires. But you don't think of what is profitable. You allow certain things in the world to master you.

Paul said, all things are lawful, but I will never be mastered by anything. Because if you allow something to master you, in that area, the Lord is not your master. See, money, the pool of money masters me.

In that area, the Lord is not my master. Yeah, there's so many areas I've allowed the Lord to be my master, but one area I've not. If food is my master, in that area, the Lord is not my master.

You know, I think of a jigsaw puzzle. You know, different little pieces put together to form a picture. And I think of a jigsaw puzzle of the face of Jesus Christ.

Many, many pieces put together. Now, if ten pieces from the face are missing, it doesn't look like Jesus at all. It's originally a picture of the face of Jesus, anyway, as we know it, the paintings, let's say.

But a few pieces are missing in that face. The nose, the eyes, certain parts are missing. And it looks like anybody's face.

So, I see that it's like that. There's certain areas where I say, Lord, I want to be like you. I want to be like you, here, here, here, here, here.

And out of the 50 pieces of the jigsaw puzzle of Jesus' face, I've got maybe about 25 of them in place. And I don't look like Jesus at all. I'm talking about my character, my life.

Because there are certain areas I don't want him to be Lord. It's a wonderful life. Because sometimes we think, if I allow Jesus to be Lord of my whole life, that means I won't even go to a vacation unless I have clarity from the Lord.

The Lord wants me to do that and to spend my money that way. You say, boy, what a bondage that'll be. You mean I can't go for a vacation wherever I feel like, when I feel like? Well, you can do it when you feel like the Lord's not going to hold you back.

He's not going to prevent you from drawing that money from the bank to do it. But Jesus would seek the Father's will. There were times when he told his disciples, we've been working so hard, let's go apart and take a little rest for a while.

He said that. So, there is a place for a type of rest and vacation. But it's a question of whether we really want God's will or not.

And very often the devil says, don't surrender to God like that because I tell you, God is a spoilsport. He'll never let you have anything that'll make you happy. He'll make your life so tight and miserable that you'll be unhappy, long-faced all the time.

That is the biggest lie the devil has convinced so many Christians about. God is a loving Father. He does not withhold any good thing from those who walk uprightly.

In case you don't know that verse, that's a great verse that you must know. Because sometimes we think that God withholds certain things from us. Psalm 84 and verse 11.

Remember this verse all your life. The last part of Psalm 84 verse 11. It's a good thing for our children to know this verse as well.

Psalm 84 verse 11. No good thing will God ever withhold from those who walk uprightly. I love that promise.

It's a wonderful promise. If it was true in the old covenant, it is much more true in the new covenant. Jesus said it like this.

If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, if they ask you for bread, you won't give a stone. How much more will your heavenly Father give good things? Matthew 7, 12. To those who ask him.

He's a good God. And my life must be a testimony to the world for the fact that God is a good God. The people who could examine every area of my life, and if they could look into all my private life, and my bank account, and everything about my life, every little detail which they may not know, but if I allow them to come and see everything, they should be able to say, boy, this man's God is a really good God.

Look how he's treated him. Look how he's blessed him. Look how he's blessed his family.

Not just spiritually. No good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly. Now, the world's understanding of a good thing is very different from the Christians' understanding of a good thing.

Jesus understood what was good, and he always chose that. So, you know, our mind must be aligned with the mind of Jesus to understand what is good. No good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly.

There's another lovely verse in Psalm 37, which is like this. You know, David wrote most of his psalms when he was, before he became king. When he became king at 30.

So, imagine, you read that at the head of the talk. David wrote this psalm when he was running for his life from some cave. He probably wrote some of his psalms like that in those 10 years, age 20 to 30, after he killed Goliath and he was anointed.

And then he became king at 30. Between the age of 20 and 30, he wrote some amazing psalms. Inspired scripture.

Anointed with the Holy Spirit. A young man, less than 30, writing scripture. But here's one psalm that he wrote as an old man, when he was nearing his death at the age of 70.

A man of experience. He writes inspired by the Holy Spirit. Psalm 37.

He says in verse 25. Let's read verse 24. Verse 23 to 25.

The steps of a man, of a godly man, are established by the Lord. The Lord protects the steps he takes. And as he takes those steps, God delights.

He says, this is my beloved son. I'm delighted in the way he's walking. And such a person may slip.

Maybe carelessly. If he falls, he will not be hurled headlong and hurt himself because the Lord immediately holds his hand. I love that.

I'm not going to be able to live a perfect life until I get to heaven. But I want my life to be ordered by the Lord and if I trip up somewhere, either through my own carelessness or my lack of diligence, the Lord will hold me. It's like a father holding his son when he sees his son tripping up.

I love that verse. I will not fall headlong and hurt myself. He'll hold my hand.

Oh, I've experienced that numerous times. Even when I've ridden a scooter in India and in situations, times when the brakes failed and various other calamities that happen on Indian roads, the Lord held my hand and I didn't break my head. Even in the days when there was no rule about wearing helmets when riding a scooter.

So, the Lord holds my hand. Then it says, in verse 25, David says, I was once a young man. Psalm 37, 25.

Now I'm an old man. But I'll tell you my testimony. David, verse 25.

I have never seen a righteous man forsaken by God. Never. He may go through many trials.

He may go through much opposition. He may be called the devil or all types of names, Bill Zybil, etc. by others.

But I've never seen him forsaken by God. And not only that, I have never seen his children or grandchildren having to beg for bread. One righteous man.

First of all, he himself was never forsaken by God. And his children don't beg for bread. What does it mean they don't beg for bread? That means they find jobs.

Who are the people who beg for bread? For food? Those who don't get jobs. Those who don't have jobs have to live on food stamps and have to beg for food and there's homeless people on the street. But he said, I've never seen the child of a righteous person having to do that.

Not only child, seed means grandchildren. If you wanted to go well with your children and grandchildren, I'll tell you what, be righteous. Doesn't matter if you don't make much money.

Be righteous. That's enough. Be upright.

Stay away from those shady things. Be upright. Be totally upright.

Your children will thank you one day. Your grandchildren will thank you that grandpa was a righteous man when they see how God blesses them. These are laws of God that have stood the test of centuries.

Love the truth. Seek to be saved from sin in every area. And I believe God has such wonderful plans for our life.

You know, I've been tremendously encouraged by reading the number of times it says in the Gospels, this was written so that it might be fulfilled what is written in the Scripture. For example, you start at the beginning of Jesus' birth. He was born in Bethlehem because in the prophet Micah had said five, six, seven hundred years earlier that he'd be born in Bethlehem.

It wasn't an accident. And then we read that he was taken to Egypt so that it might be fulfilled what is written in Scripture that God called his son to come out of Egypt. That's in Malachi, sorry, Matthew chapter 2, verse 15.

Imagine a little thing like he's having to go to Egypt as a little baby. That's to fulfill a certain Scripture, it says. A Scripture from Matthew 2, 15, which is a quotation from Hosea chapter 11.

And then it says he came back and he lived, it's all in Matthew chapter 2. He came back and he lived in Nazareth. You know, it says here Joseph came back and he came back perhaps to Bethlehem which is his hometown, Matthew 2, 22. But when he heard that Arculus, the son of Herod, was ruling there, he said, I can't stay here.

I don't know whether he prayed or anything but he just decided, let me go to a safer place. And he went to Nazareth. And it says when he stayed there that fulfilled the Scripture that Jesus should be called in Nazareth.

That's amazing. How God sovereignly overruled that even when Joseph took Jesus and they decided to live in Nazareth that was a fulfillment of Scripture. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.

And then you see throughout Jesus' life so many times it says so that it might be fulfilled what is written in Scripture. And I come to the end of his life in John chapter 19 and it says when he was being crucified we read here that he said, I thirst. A very simple thing.

Towards the end of his life, the closing moments of his life, Matthew 19, 28 he said, I'm thirsty. And a jar of sour wine was standing there. Matthew 19, verse 28.

This was to fulfill the Scripture. Even a little thing like that was to fulfill the Scripture. From his birth till his death.

So many times. What I'm trying to say is Jesus' entire life was planned by his father. From birth to death.

A lot of it was prophesied in the Old Testament and step by step he fulfilled it. And he wasn't mechanically doing it. He lived with clarity before his father's face all the time and he never missed the father's will even once.

So that at the end of his life he could say, Father, I have finished all the work you gave me to do. You told me to stay 30 years in Nazareth without preaching at all. You told me to work 12 years as a carpenter from 18 to 30.

I worked. You told me to leave Nazareth and come to Capernaum after my baptism and I did that. Everything was... And now, how does it apply to me? Because I read in John 17 and verse 23 that Jesus says, I want the world to know.

It says it where the Lord is saying something to me. Zach, I want the world to know something through your life. The world must know something through my life.

What is it? That I have loved you. That the Father has loved you just like He loved me. Imagine Jesus telling me that.

I want the world to know that the Father loves you just like He loved me. I said, Lord, really? You want the world to look at my life and how it has gone in my life and how it goes now and to say that the Father must be loving this man just like He loved Jesus. Wow! I just put my name there.

You can put your name there. If your body is for the Lord and if your mind is the Lord's. I put my name into some of these scriptures and you can put yours too.

If you say, Lord, my only desire on earth is to fulfill your plan for my life. I have no ambition outside of your will for my life. Say that to God.

Mean it. And live according to that every day. It's amazing what He will do for you.

There are a lot of things. You won't even have to lift a finger. You know, I'll tell you something which all of you, many people do not know.

All these churches that now I have a responsibility for. Nearly a hundred of them. I have not planted one of them I'm not trying to be humble.

I only know the truth. God did it. And He led me there and said, water it.

Take care of it. God did it. In different places.

Suddenly He would gather some people together and there'd be a little church there. And I'd go along after that. That's why I always tell people who say, Brother Zach, we heard you planted a church here.

I planted a church there. Please come here and plant one. I say, I never planted a church anywhere.

God arranged circumstances and people and they gathered together and something came up and the Lord just sent me there to water or build up something which is there, but God started the work. A work which is not started by God, I will have nothing to do with it. Because I know it won't last.

There's a verse I live by in all these matters. In Matthew chapter 15 because sometimes I have many believers in different parts of India and other parts of the world who have some bright ideas of what they think I should be doing and I don't always listen to them. I say, I want to live my life listening to God.

Matthew 15 Jesus said the verse which I'll never forget all my life. Matthew 15 verse 13 Every plant which my heavenly Father did not plant will one day be uprooted. Every church which my heavenly Father did not plant will one day be destroyed and uprooted.

I don't want to waste my time building such churches. Absolute waste of time. One day it will be uprooted.

I want to go where God's doing something where something will last for all eternity. Every single church which my heavenly Father did not plant will be uprooted. That's why I don't just accept invitations anywhere or everywhere.

I pray and I say, Lord, if you give me the leading, I'll go. And that's why 16 years ago when I was asked whether I'd come and oversee a church in Loveland where you meet now. It was not called RLCF in those days.

I prayed. I said, Lord, if you want me to go, I'll go. Otherwise, I don't know the future.

I don't know what the next 20 years of that church is going to be like. I've got no idea. But I have no interest.

I have no lust to go here or there, anywhere. I have zero lust to go anywhere. And the Lord gave me peace.

So I know His will. Romans 8, 6 says, The mind of the Spirit is life and peace. If you find an upsurge of life and peace when you're considering something, after praying about it for some time, you know that's the will of God.

When you feel a dragging down or a hesitation about some course of action, it's not the will of God. That's how I came there. And as I look back, I say, Lord, I can see pretty clearly that you've planted something there.

Of course, it has its ups and downs, but the Lord takes care of it. There are storms and all types of things. Jesus faced storms, even when He was on a boat.

So, the boat Jesus is in today will face storms. But He calms them. He'll calm the storm and He'll bring us safely to the shore.

I have no doubt about that. I've never prayed, Lord, take us safely through the lake without a storm. You know, think if all the Gospels were written without Jesus ever facing any problem.

I thought of it like that. Some people like to have a church which never faces any problems. Okay, let me tell you the Gospels, if it were written like that.

Jesus went to a wedding in Cana, but fortunately, they had made provision for plenty of wine. So, there was no shortage of it, and everybody had a good time when they went home. Another time, Jesus was preaching to a huge crowd of 5,000 people, and they were all getting hungry.

But fortunately, everybody had brought their lunchbox with them, so they could all sit down and eat. And then, another time, Jesus was going across a lake with all His disciples, and boy, the sea was really calm. And they reached the other side safely.

And another time, disciples went out to fish, and boy, what a lot of fish they caught. Wonderful. And so they came, they didn't meet Jesus, they just came along and said, Lord, we caught a lot of fish today.

And if the Gospels were written like that, even the Sunday school children would say, that's boring. We don't want to hear such stories. I wouldn't want to hear that either.

But the Gospels are exciting. Because everywhere Jesus went, there was a problem, and He solved it. So churches will have problems, marriages will have problems, but He'll solve all of them.

He'll come out triumphant over every one of them. We may have physical sicknesses, we'll overcome them. We are called to be overcomers, we are called to be more than conquerors.

That's what I'm calling. Decide that you will not live by what is lawful, but at the higher level of what is profitable. You can perhaps go to heaven by living just what is lawful.

If you do what is unlawful, you won't even go into the Kingdom of God. No question, you'll be out. But if you live at the level of doing what is lawful, you'll make it to God's Kingdom.

You'll sort of scrape in, you know, crawl into the Kingdom somehow or the other. I don't want to crawl into the Kingdom. I want to go with my head held high and to hear Jesus saying, well done, good and faithful servant.

I hope that's the way all of you want to live. So, there are wonderful examples of that, like Paul, and there are other examples of people who fell away, who started out well. You know, Judas Iscariot was a wholehearted disciple of Jesus when he was chosen.

I'll tell you why, because it says in Luke chapter 6, he became a traitor. He wasn't a traitor from the beginning. It's very clear.

He became a traitor. Now, when you say that somebody became a leper, that's clear that he was not a leper from the beginning, and that's why it says here in Luke 6, verse 16, he became a traitor. A wholehearted disciple, just like Peter.

I have a little theory. I believe Judas Iscariot was the cleverest of all the disciples whom Jesus chose. And one reason why I believe it is that you've got to be really clever to live with 11 other people and fool them all that you're not the traitor.

In the Last Supper they didn't even know who was the crook. What a clever man he was to disguise himself for all those years. But if he had used that cleverness for God, God has a lot of clever people in his kingdom, I'll tell you.

The apostle Paul is one of them. He's got some uneducated people like Peter as well. They're both equally important.

But when he wanted to write these episodes, he had to choose Paul, and I personally, this is a theory I have, I believe that Judas Iscariot was the original person chosen to write the episodes. But he failed, and gone. He had to be replaced by Paul.

There's a verse in Revelation 3 which says, be careful that nobody takes your crown. There's a crown meant for me, Revelation 3, 11 says. Hold fast to what you have otherwise the crown which is meant for you, somebody else will get.

Is it possible for somebody else to get the crown which is meant for me? Which is meant for me because of my faithfulness? That guy got his crown for you as he is faithful, but he gets mine as well. That's what Revelation 3, 11 says. Paul got the crown meant for Judas Iscariot.

I don't want anybody else to take my crown. I'm not living for crowns. I just want, to me, the greatest crown is Jesus saying to me, well done, good and faithful servant.

Not something I put on my head. But to hear the words of Jesus saying, well done, good and faithful servant. Boy, I'd do anything in my life to hear those words when I come into heaven.

I hope you have a passion like that. Say, Lord, I'll deny myself anything on this earth. I want to count for you.

I've drifted along in my Christian life so long. Is that what you're saying? Are you one of those who's just drifted along in your Christian life? Don't you want your life to count for God from today? Say, Lord, I want to present every part of my body to you. My tongue, my eyes, my hand.

As a living sacrifice. I want to worship you like that. I want to allow my mind to be renewed by studying the scriptures, understanding your mind, and understanding your ways.

How many of you are devoting your time to study the scriptures? To understand God's mind. Not to preach. No, no, no, no, no.

I didn't study the Bible to preach. I wanted to know God's mind. And even today, I want to know God's mind.

And I find God revealing things to me in the scriptures even now. Well, brothers and sisters, thank you for listening. I hope something good will come out of what we heard today in all of your lives.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, you have such a wonderful plan for every one of our lives. Help us not to miss it.

Help us to fulfill it. Especially those who are young who have their whole life in front of them. What a fantastic privilege from day one to walk in your footsteps to fulfill your plan for their life.

I pray it will be so, Lord. Build your church in RLC of Loveland and in other places. For your flooded churches, encourage them to be disciples.

Raise up many real shepherds to guide the sheep along the right path. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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