

Love and Fellowship

by Zac Poonen

The most important thing in the Christian life is fellowship, which existed from eternity past and is the key to joy and love.

Duration: 55:58

Scripture: Genesis 2:25, Matthew 28:19-20, Luke 6:36, John 3:16, Acts 1:8, Acts 5:3-5, Ephesians 4:25, 1 John 4:7-8, Revelation 3:15-16

Topics: "Christian Love", "Holy Spirit"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of pursuing love and fellowship as primary aspects of the Christian life. It delves into the depth of God's love, the need for sincerity, truthfulness, and mercy in our interactions, and the significance of being filled with the Holy Spirit to have a genuine passion for sharing the gospel and building meaningful relationships.

Transcript

Let's turn to the first letter of John in chapter 1. There is something wonderful in these first three verses that tells us about how things were right at the beginning before there was anything in this universe. Today we see the world as a fallen world. We are surrounded by people who are fallen.

And even the best of Christians is a very poor reflection of what God is like, the best of Christians. But if we can look back in time to when there was nothing, no universe, no earth, no stars, no planets, no man, no angels, no devil, nothing. Way back in eternity, when there was only God, who existed from all eternity.

You know, God has given us the power of imagination. And all of us know how in our unconverted days we have used that imagination to imagine a lot of filth. And a lot of that filth was very real in our minds.

But I find that a lot of Christians, after they get converted, do not use their imagination to think of what is good. It's a tremendous power. Animals don't have that power.

We have that power too. And I find it's wonderful sometimes to think about God and use our mind and our reason and our imagination to think of what it was like when nothing existed but God. Because when we go back there to the beginning, we understand what is most important.

A lot of other things, you know, are measures that God had to adopt because sin came. And, you know, there's so much of emphasis now on various things. A lot of people say, some would say the important

thing is water baptism, some would say the important thing is speaking in tongues.

But if you go back to the beginning, there was no water baptism. There was no speaking in tongues there. But there were certain other things which are far more important.

And one of those primary things was fellowship. The Bible says that God is love. It says in 1 John.

When it describes God, it says God is love. And Christianity is unique among all the religions of the world because it proclaims one God. There is only one God.

There are some other religions also that proclaim one God. But Christianity also proclaims that this one God is in three persons. That's absolutely unique.

There are religions with many gods. There are religions with one God. But Christianity is the truth because it proclaims one God and in three persons.

And I'll tell you why God had to be more than one person. It's very simple. Do you know that it's impossible to love unless there is some person to love? It's impossible.

Have you ever thought of that? How do you love if you're all by yourself? Supposing you're an island all by yourself and you say you're full of love. How do we know? So God had to be more than one person if he was love from all eternity. At the same time, we don't believe in multiplicity of gods.

There is one God in three persons. And the Father loved the Son, loved the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit loved the Son and the Father, and the Son loved the Father and the Holy Spirit. It was love there.

You know what existed in this universe before anything else? Love and fellowship. They had fellowship among themselves. They spoke with each other.

In fact, the Bible begins with God saying, let us make man in our image. There was conversation, there was fellowship, and there was love. And one day when we get into eternity again and join Jesus and the Father in heaven, we won't be talking about water baptism or speaking in tongues or even victory over sin.

It'll be fellowship and love once again. And in this in-between period, between eternity past and eternity future, the wisest Christians, the wisest people, are those who recognize that love and fellowship are the most important things I must pursue, along with all the other things which are secondary. You know, we pursue many things in life.

Some are primary, some are secondary. And the wise man is the man who knows to give priority to those things that are primary, those things that are secondary. All of us are doing that every day.

For example, you may feel that going to work is primary. Watching a cricket match is not primary. Nothing wrong in it, but it's secondary.

Good things can be secondary. So in the Christian life, unless we see what is primary and what's secondary, we're not really going to make the progress we should. So if you want to know what's primary, you've got to go back to the beginning.

It says here, 1 John 1, what was from the beginning, way back in eternity past, and which we have heard, you know, that which is from the beginning, came down to earth, and we've seen with our eyes, and we've

looked at and touched with our hands, which is the word of life. And it speaks about life there, it's love. Hatred is death, life is love.

And this life was manifested. There's eternal life, which is with the Father from the beginning. And we've seen and proclaimed to you this eternal life, which is with the Father and which we have seen.

And what we have seen and heard, we proclaim to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us. Those two words, you know, life and fellowship, those are the most important things, because those are the things that existed from eternity. And the purpose is that he says that you also may have fellowship with us, and our fellowship is with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

And these things we write to you, so that your joy may be made full and complete. I am absolutely convinced that if a person is really living the Christian life as he should, his life will be one of continuous joy, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If your life is not like that, I want to say you're not living the Christian life to the full.

I know so many years in my Christian life, after I was born again, I never knew what it was to rejoice all the time, never to be depressed, never to be discouraged, never to be gloomy, never to be in a bad mood. I never knew that. And even when I say that, some of you think that's impossible.

I want to tell you the good news of the Bible is, it's not impossible. The Bible says, Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice 24x7. That is God's will.

And here it says, this is the reason why many people don't rejoice. We are writing these things to you, so that your joy may be full. You are not concentrating on life, and love, and fellowship.

Something else is priority in your life. No wonder your joy is not full. Something else is more important to you in life, making money perhaps, becoming a little famous, accomplishing something.

Okay? Don't ever expect your joy to be full. You may have occasional spurts of joy, but if you want to have joy, your joy to be full, you've got to get back to what is priority number one. Fellowship and love that the Father had.

And this is something which nobody could experience until the day of Pentecost. There's no command in the Old Testament which said, Rejoice in the Lord always. Even this psalm that we just read, Psalm 150, Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.

You know, they could do it only once a week. Saturday morning, they'd come into the temple and praise the Lord. All those people of Israel under the Old Covenant.

Monday onwards, they'd go back and fight with their wives, and pursue money, and other things the rest of the week, and come back next Saturday again to praise the Lord. This is the life. This was the life of all people in Israel.

And I tell you, this is the life of 99% of believers today. That's why I say 99% of believers are living in the Old Covenant. It's almost as though Jesus hasn't come.

It's almost as though the Holy Spirit has not been poured out. And even a lot of people who talk about the Holy Spirit being poured out, all they can think of is speak in tongues or fall down on the ground or something like that. And not realize that the Holy Spirit has been poured out to bring us into that life and

fellowship that the Father had from all eternity.

Romans 5.5 is the proof of whether you're filled with the Spirit or not. The love of God is shed abroad, poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. To me, that's the clear verse of the man filled with the Holy Spirit.

The love of God fills his heart. His heart's full of love for God, and love for one and for others. And he determines not to give the devil any place in his heart.

You know, the Bible says, don't give place to the devil. Let me show you that verse. Ephesians in chapter 4. And see the context where it comes.

I just want you to see that verse. Verse 27, Ephesians 4.27. In the Message Bible it says, don't give the devil any kind of foothold in your life. That means don't let the devil put his foot in the door.

You know, when somebody's got their foot in the door, and he's stronger than you, you're not going to be able to keep that door shut. No, the devil's stronger than you. I might as well tell you that.

Don't let him put his foot in the door. Don't give him a foothold in your life. The King James Version, it says, don't give any place to the devil in your life.

And you see the context there, that when you sin, sorry, when you get angry, and that can happen sometimes, he says, please remember to get rid of it before the day is over. That's what he says in verse 26. Don't leave anger in your heart overnight.

How many believers do you think have taken that verse seriously? For many, many married couples through 30 years, to those marriages I've conducted myself and other married couples who sought my advice, I have always given them this advice. Don't go to bed without setting things right with each other. Never.

When you talk to newly married couples, you say, hey, you might have tensions in your life. One newly married couple said, you mean we'll have tensions? What do you older married couples think about that? You don't have any doubt, do you? I say, I'm not saying that you'll fight with each other. I hope you'll never fight.

But there can be misunderstandings. Both of you are imperfect. And as long as two imperfect people live together, there are going to be some type of misunderstanding, tension, problem.

And here it says, that can become anger. Anger does not always mean you yell and scream. I mean, that's anger after it's developed and become a full grown man.

I'm talking about a little seed of anger, which can be in your heart. You don't even open your mouth. You must get rid of it before you go to bed.

Can you imagine what would happen if all Christians born again, forget all the others, born again Christians decided from today onwards, I'm never ever going to go to bed with any bitterness in my heart against anybody in the whole world, leave alone my husband and wife. And that's number one, but anyone in the whole world, I'm never going to have any anger in my heart against anyone in the whole world. Because if I do that, it says here, the devil's put a foot in the door.

He's got a foot in the door. And he's going to, he's not going to stay there with a foot in the door, he's just going to gradually creep in. And Jesus said, he's a thief who's come to steal, kill, destroy.

John chapter 10, verse 10. Jesus said, I've come that you might have life, life abundantly. And he contrasts it there in that passage with what the devil has come to steal, kill, destroy.

What do you think the devil has come to steal from you? You think he's come to steal your money? No. He knows that if he puts more money into your bank account, he'll lead you astray. He's not going to steal your money.

If he takes away your money, you may begin to cry out to God for help in your poverty. He doesn't want that. He'd probably make you a millionaire to destroy you.

But I'll tell you something else he'll steal. He'll steal your love, first of all. Go and ask any married couple, if the devil hasn't stolen away their love for one another.

Oh, they think they are crazily in love with each other the day they are married. Oh, we can't live without each other and all that. And six months later, sometimes they can't stand the sight of you.

How did that happen? The devil got there. The devil got right there, just like the first marriage in the Bible. The devil got in between.

Because they didn't concentrate on what was most important. Is love and fellowship the most important thing in your life? Check that. If the breakfast is not ready in time, or the lunch is not tasty, or something goes wrong in the house, is love and fellowship the most important for you at that time? It's easy to sit here in this meeting and say, oh yeah, love and fellowship is the most important.

You're not being tested here. No, we're only being instructed. The testing will start when you go home.

And I want to say to you, in Jesus name, you can have a life. I don't care who you are. If you open your life to be filled with the Holy Spirit, you can have a life where you have joy 24-7.

And that can come if you say, love and fellowship are going to be the most important things for me in my life. And the moment I see something contrary to love and fellowship, come in my heart as a seed. It's like a weed.

The devil's planted there in your garden. Pull it out. Don't nurture it and wait till it grows.

You know how our flesh nature is such, we have a secret delight in nursing grudges. It can even be whenever you wish something evil for somebody. Do you ever wish anything evil for somebody? I mean, do you wish for somebody that what you don't wish for yourself? Do you ever do that? Do you wish for somebody's children? Listen carefully, you mothers and fathers.

Do you wish for somebody's children what you never wish for your own children? I want to tell you in Jesus name, you got a lot of the devil in you. I'm not angry with you. I'm just telling you the truth.

Like a doctor saying you got cancer. And that devil has taken away your joy. That's why you get so discouraged so often.

That's why you get depressed. That's why you're in a bad mood. That's why you yell at your husband and get impatient with your children.

It's because you let the devil ride in. Jesus gave us a law, do unto others as you would have them do unto you. You can expand that and say that means that I wish for others something good because I wish good for myself.

I never wished evil for myself in my whole life. I've never wished evil for my children in my whole life. I wish good for other people's children too.

Do you do that? That shows you're a godly person. Even if you can't preach for nuts and even if you can't sing one line properly, you're a godly brother. You're a godly sister.

If you wish for other people, what you wish for yourself. If you wish for other people's children, what you wish for your own children. If not, to some measure, you got the devil in you.

He's got in. Recognize it. Don't say that's a weakness.

As long as you call the devil a weakness, you'll never get rid of him. It's not a weakness. It's demonic, evil, filthy, sinful, god-hating sin.

Call it by the worst name possible. When you hear something, you know it's very easy to test yourself. Some of you may think you're spirit-filled believers.

Okay, just test yourself right now. When you hear that something good happened to someone, do you feel happy? If not, you got the devil. He's up to it.

When you hear something bad happened to someone, you feel a little happy, you got the devil. God's not like that. You're not filled with the Holy Spirit.

You're filled with an evil spirit. When you wish evil for others, you're happy when something evil happens. Do you think God is happy when something bad happens to anyone on the face of the earth, even to his enemies? The Bible says, God is so good.

He makes the sun to rise on the good and the evil. He makes the rain to fall on that atheist farmer who says there is no God. He makes the rain and the sun and the blessing of God to come on so many people.

When I think of the way Jesus Christ is insulted, I believe that's one of the marks of true Christianity. We don't get all upset and create riots when Christ is insulted. Now, Christ has been insulted for 2,000 years on this earth.

People have called him all types of filthy names. I don't even want to mention it here. And the Lord in heaven, God in heaven watches this.

What would you think if somebody called your son or your daughter a homosexual, immoral, lesbian, filthy, murderer, thief, liar, devil? How would you react to that if somebody called your child that? And again, and again, and again, God's heard people say that to us about his son for 2,000 years. And he loves them. He gives such people health, long life, money.

He doesn't give them leprosy, cancer. You know, that's love. I don't believe that most of us have understood a fraction of that because it's not been priority in our lives.

Perhaps you got so used to third-rate Christianity that it's become normal. It's like people who live in the slums. They got used to everything being filthy.

They got used to stinking surroundings. That's normal. Now when you go there, you say, boy, how do they live here? They live quite comfortably.

And when a godly man sees someone who can gossip, he says, how does this sister live with gossip? They're quite comfortable with it. They're living in a slum. Or when a godly person sees someone who's got a bad attitude towards someone, he says, how does he live with that? He's supposed to be a believer.

They're living in a slum. They're used to it. They're used to that stink and filth.

They've lived there for years because most of the other believers around them are like that. I tell you, when I see the condition of lots of people who call themselves believers, I am reminded of the slums. People comfortable in filth.

Well, I don't want to live there. You don't choose to live in a slum if you had an option. Why do you choose to live in a slum spiritually? Anything contrary to the law of love is a slum.

Please remember that, my brothers and sisters. God wants us to have his life, that same life and fellowship which he had. You know how much Jesus prayed? You notice how whenever you have a burden, say your child is seriously sick.

Have you noticed how you pray at those times? You don't say, well, Lord, my child is sick. Please heal me and then forget about it. In a five minute prayer or even a one minute prayer, ten times you will say, Lord, my child is sick.

Heal him. Heal him. Heal him.

I mean, once is not enough. It's not because God didn't hear you the first time. It's because there's such a burden in your heart.

It's pouring out. Lord, heal my child. Please do something in Jesus' name.

Heal my child. We say it ten times even though God heard it the first time because we are pouring out the burden of our heart. When you don't have a burden, you know how you pray.

You pray once and then forget about it. But when you have a burden, it's not like that. Now when you read John chapter 17, the only prayer of Jesus which has been fully recorded in scripture, the only prayer, you find he had a burden.

He kept on saying it, God, Father, do this. Do this. You know what it was? That these, my disciples, will be one.

Father, they must be one. Father, they must be one. Just like you pray for your child when he's sick.

Father, heal my child. Heal my child. Do this.

Deliver my child. Father, they must be one. They must be one as you and I are one.

Father, I'm doing this so they must be one. I've given them this. They must be one.

It's a tremendous burden because he knew what fellowship meant. You've heard me say this, how some years ago right here when I was standing here in one of our Sunday meetings and I heard a couple of the instruments not playing in tune with each other and it disturbed me. It was many years ago.

And the Lord said to me immediately, I am not disturbed by that. And I learned that day that God does not care much for music perfectly played. If he did, he would have made all his children musical.

But he hasn't. There are some of his children who can't sing one line straight without making a mistake. And there are people in the world who can sing ten times better than any Christian.

But the Lord said to me, it's not bad music that disturbs me. It's two people here in this meeting who are not in tune with each other. That disturbs me.

Husband and wife who are not in tune with each other. Two brothers who are not in fellowship with each other. Two sisters who won't talk to each other.

That disturbs me much more. And I prayed a prayer that day standing right here which I have prayed continuously for many years. Lord, let the things that disturb you, disturb me.

And the things that don't disturb you, don't let them ever disturb me. So I can bear now when I listen to people sing out of tune. It doesn't bother me one bit.

I tell you honestly, it doesn't bother me one bit. But it does disturb me when I hear that a husband and wife are not in good fellowship with each other. Or two brothers are not in fellowship.

Or two sisters avoid each other. I say, when will they get rid of hell from their hearts? Are they just gonna sit here and listen and listen and listen and listen and listen to messages? Some have been sitting here for so many years and they still haven't got rid of the devil from their lives. Are you gonna wait till Jesus comes and then get a surprise that the devil ruled your life for so many years even though you thought you were a senior brother or senior sister in CFC? The purpose of the preaching of God's Word here is to save you from that calamity.

I really believe it to be a calamity. I tell you, I would not like to be in your place when you stand before the Lord in that day if you have not concentrated on love and fellowship as primary in your life. It also says here in Ephesians 4 about not giving place to the devil, verse 25, lay aside all falsehood and speak truth.

That's another thing that gives the devil a foothold in our life. When there's any type of lie in our life, when we pretend to be something we are not, when you smile at someone with that weak type of smile which shows you're not really in fellowship with each other. You're trying to smile to be cordial and courteous but the weak type of smile that spreads on your lips shows something is wrong in your heart.

You're a hypocrite. Face up to it. Go home.

I don't believe you can set it right there. You need to go home and probably fast and pray and say, Lord, there's something wrong in my attitude towards that brother or toward that sister. I couldn't make eye contact and look cheerfully and smile.

I turn away or I avoid or I've got this weak type of smile. There's something wrong with me, Lord. How many of you have taken that seriously? I don't know whether you'll take it seriously even today.

You've heard these things, some of you, for many years. And if you haven't taken it seriously until now, I don't know whether you'll take it seriously today. You probably just wake up at the judgment seat of Christ, if at all you ever get there, and discover that you ruined your life because you let the devil fool you.

Don't let that happen. Speak the truth. Speak the truth doesn't mean tell everybody all your secrets.

Don't misread scripture. Speak the truth means don't try and bluff people. Don't be dishonest.

Be sincere, be upright, be truthful. The devil gets a foothold in our life when we are insincere, when we are not truthful, when we try to cover up. There's nothing wrong in hiding things that you don't say anything.

That's okay. But if you say something, speak the truth. Otherwise you say, I'd rather not talk about it.

That's fine. But if you talk about something, it must be the truth. I mean, there may be out of 100 things in my life, I may want to speak to you only about one of those things.

That would be the truth. The other 99 things, I'm sorry, I don't want to talk to you about it. No, those are private.

But if we say something, it must be the truth. Because the devil is a liar. He gets a foothold in people when they tell lies.

It's very, very important that in our life we seek to ensure that God has complete control of every area of our life. I love that passage in Genesis chapter 2, when God first created man. It says here, man and woman, Genesis 2.25, they were both naked and they were not ashamed.

That means they were, you know, we can apply that spiritually. We don't do that physically today, but spiritually, that to be completely open with each other. That's how fellowship is.

I don't want to hide anything. There may be 101 things I'm ashamed of in my life. God's blotted them out with the blood of Jesus Christ, and I don't want to talk about them.

But I'm talking about what I am right now. I'm not talking about confessing all the wretched things we all did in our past. They're cleansed in the blood of Christ.

And even if God says I won't remember, I don't remember them either. But I want you to know me as I am today. That's the meaning of naked and not ashamed.

Naked doesn't mean the sins of your past life and my past life, but as you are today. I want you to know me as I am today. You must be willing to be known as you are today.

Not pretending to be more spiritual than you are. That is putting fig leaves. A lot of people, their fellowship is with fig leaves, covering up.

Do you know how Jesus cursed the fig tree and cursed those fig leaves? He curses all this type of covering up. Yeah, he does, even today. In fellowship, there is an openness.

There's no pretense. There's no trying to show that I'm better than you, or I'm more spiritual than I really am. I tell you, it's a very dangerous thing to get up in the pulpit.

Sometimes in the pulpit we can talk way beyond our spiritual experience in life. That's why the Bible says, be careful whenever you speak to those who speak God's word. Don't ever speak beyond the level of your faith.

Romans 12 says, prophesy according to the proportion of your faith. If I were to use an illustration, write checks according to how much money you've got in the bank account. If you're not sure, please check in the bank how much you have, then write a check.

Don't try to show off by writing a check for 5 lakhs, or 5 million rupees, when you've got only 50 rupees in your account. That's showing off. You know what happens if you give that check in the bank? It'll bounce, and according to the laws of the land today in India, you can be imprisoned.

It's serious to give a check for 51 rupees when you've got only 50 rupees in your account. What about in the Christian life? A lot of people are in a prison, because they are pretending that they have more than they really have. Sincerity.

The devil is always trying to make you a liar. We don't tell lies with our mouth so much. You know, when Ananias and Sapphira, that Peter told them in Acts chapter 5, why have you told a lie to the Holy Spirit? I'll show you that passage in Acts chapter 5. Acts of the Apostles chapter 5. Ananias and Sapphira, they sold a piece of land, it says.

And they kept some of the price for themselves. There's nothing wrong in that. Nothing wrong in that.

How many of us have sold a piece of land and given it all for God's work? Nobody. I don't think there's anybody here who's ever done it. There's nothing wrong in it.

There's nothing wrong if you decide, I want to give you, I mean, even to give 10% of the sale of your property to God, boy, that's a fantastic amount. Very few Christians like these guys probably give 50%. There's nothing wrong in that.

There's nothing wrong even if you kept everything to yourself. But, they pretended. That was the thing.

You know, everybody was coming in, it says in chapter 4 verse 37, people were selling their lands and bringing it to the Apostles' feet, and Ananias and Sapphira just joined the queue. They got in line, along with all the others, and they never opened their mouth. Everybody was putting the money at the feet of the Apostles for God's work and for giving out to the poor people.

And these people also just came quietly and put the money and went away. And as they were going away, Peter said, hey, come here. Boy, we need people like Peter in the church today, who can look at a person and say, hey, come here, there's something wrong with you.

And Ananias, why have you told a lie to the Holy Spirit? Verse 3. And I said, I never even opened my mouth. I never said anything. Did he say a word? Nothing.

He was a liar. Because he stood in line, pretending that he was giving everything, like all the others were giving. When you sit in a church, preaching holiness, and you glory that you belong to that church, and you're not pursuing holiness in your life, that is the sin of Ananias.

And I would say to you, any of you who are part of this church and you're not pursuing holiness, I'm not talking to visitors now. But you're a part of this church and you're not pursuing holiness, I want to say to you in Jesus' name, why are you telling a lie to the Holy Spirit? You say, I didn't open my mouth. I didn't say anything.

I never even got into the pulpit. I know you didn't open your mouth. But you lie by pretending to be pursuing holiness, like everybody else in this church is pursuing.

And it says here, Ananias fell down and breathed his last. That's one place where somebody fell down, like we see a lot of people falling down today. You want to fall down like that? He fell down and breathed his last.

A lot of people spiritually dead, they breathed their last already, because they allowed the devil to make them liars. Be careful, brothers and sisters. Think of what the Holy Spirit has come to produce in our lives, truthfulness, integrity, and love and fellowship.

For example, when we are not merciful to someone, do you know that there's only one place in the universe where there's no mercy? That's hell. In hell there's no mercy. The devil's got zero mercy.

The Bible says God is full of mercy, because he's full of love. Love is full of mercy, compassion, forgiveness. I picture this sometimes in my mind.

I use my imagination a lot. I imagine, if I were in heaven and I'm just watching the Father and Jesus Christ, listening to all the prayers coming up from the earth. And I imagine, I'm watching, what are they doing? Most of the prayers that come from the earth, from all over the earth.

Remember, there are millions of people praying to God and to Jesus all the time from the earth. So it's continuous, 24 hours, prayers coming up. Father, forgive me.

Lord Jesus, forgive me. And what's God saying from heaven? Forgiven. Forgiven.

Forgiven. Do you know what the Lord is saying from heaven all the time? Forgiven. Forgiven.

That one there, forgiven. The other side of the earth, forgiven. Forgiven.

Forgiven. Forgiven. I picture that in my mind.

That's what God's doing all the time. Just forgiving. Forgiving.

Forgiving. Forgiving. Forgiving.

24-7. And I say, Lord, make me like that. I want to be like God.

A lot of you have said many times in your life, you want to be like God. I'll tell you, this is what God is like. He's constantly forgiving.

Somebody here, somebody there, somebody there, somebody, other person here, behind him, here, all over the place. And we may be surrounded with people who harm us and say, forgive me. Forgive me.

Forgive me. Oh, yeah, sure. Forgiven.

Forgiven. Forgiven. Forgiven.

Are you like that? Did you pray that you want to be like Jesus? Or was it just an empty ritual of a prayer? This is what it means to be like Jesus. It says in Luke 6, verse 37, be merciful as your Heavenly Father is merciful. He's given us a standard, like Mother Teresa said.

Jesus didn't tell us to be like Moses or Elijah or Paul or Peter. He said to be like the Father. Boy, who's your example? Moses, Elijah, Paul, Peter? The Father.

Be merciful as your Heavenly Father is merciful. Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect in mercy towards other people. That's how God is.

And hell is the opposite. No mercy. And listen to this.

If there is one person on earth, towards whom you're not merciful and you cannot forgive, I want to tell you something. You've got a little bit of hell right inside your heart. You've got a little bit of hell right inside your heart.

No wonder your life is so miserable. No wonder you're depressed so often. I give you my testimony.

It's been many years since I've got depressed. And yet, once upon a time in my life, I used to be depressed frequently. I was discouraged.

Dear brothers and sisters, I want to tell you, it is possible to live a life where we never get discouraged, we never get depressed, if we decide that love and fellowship are the primary things I'm going to pursue. I'm going to open up my whole being, every area of my life, to Jesus Christ. I'm going to ask Him to examine every nook and corner.

You know, the Jews had a law that the day after the Day of Pentecost, not after the Day of Pentecost, sorry, the day after Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread at the time of Passover, they were to ensure that there was no leaven in their house. Now, many of them would cook with leaven, just like we make bread with leaven. They would do that.

And there could be a little child that threw a piece of bread under the bed somewhere. And there are pictures of these Jewish fathers and mothers going with lamps, looking under the beds in every little corner of the house, because the law said, no leaven must be found in your house when you eat the Passover. Now, I picture that in my mind.

Picture this in your mind, this mother and father bending under the bed and searching in the corners, moving the cupboards and seeing, is my child thrown some little bread piece somewhere? I've got to get rid of it before the Passover begins this evening at 6 o'clock. The Passover begins, I've got to clear it out. There's a time limit.

It's not endless. I've got to finish with it. Think if you searched your life like that.

I tell you, my own conviction is, this is my conviction, that those Israeli people had a hundred times more fear of God than today's believers. When the Lord told them, on the day of the Passover, no leaven must be found in your house, they would search, they would take time to search every nook and corner of their house to see that there was not even one little crumb of bread somewhere and they would clean it out. But when God says, make sure you go to bed every night without any anger in your heart, how many

Christians search like that every nook and corner with a lamp and say, Oh Lord, is there any wrong attitude in my heart towards anybody? There are believers who have been believers for years who don't talk to their husband or wife because of some misunderstanding and go to bed like that.

And even where one partner approaches the other and says, listen, I'm sorry for what I said or did if you misunderstood me. No. They act like spoiled children.

35 year old behave like 2 year olds. They call themselves believers. The name of God is blasphemed among the heathen because they are Christians.

Yeah. You know, I wish these people would change their names and take some heathen name instead of being known as Christians. I wish they would go and sit in some other non-Christian place instead of sitting in a church and behaving like that.

I really believe that. And I'm not saying something which is not in the Bible. I'll show you that's exactly what the Bible says in Revelation chapter 3. Go some other place.

Don't sit in the church. Go and join some other place. Revelation chapter 3. He says, verse 15.

He's telling an elder person, I know your deeds. You're neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot because you're lukewarm.

I'll spit you out of my mouth. He said, I don't want you in this church. Why does the Lord say to somebody, I don't want you in this church? It's not because he can't preach well or he can't sing well.

God couldn't care less for those things. But because he's neither hot nor cold. You know how in the world there is this expression, something is better than nothing.

It's not true in the Christian life. You'd say, well, at least this guy is not cold, man. He's lukewarm.

You know what the Lord says? I wish you were cold. Cold means an outright, worldly, sinful, outrightly, openly sinful type of person. A person who doesn't even claim to be a Christian or any such thing.

You say, ah, I'm a sinner. You've seen people like that. There's glory in there.

I'm an adulterer. That's right. I pursue after money.

I'm not ashamed of that. I live for money. I live for enjoyment.

I live for sin. And I want to enjoy sin as much as I like. That's a cold person.

Can you imagine the Lord saying, I wish you were like that? That's what he says. It's God's word. I wish you were like that.

That's not the best. The best is you're on fire for God. I want to live totally for Christ on this earth.

This is the only thing God created me for His pleasure to do His will. I don't want to live to make money. I want to live to please God, do His will, and accomplish the purpose with which He brought me to this earth.

The Lord says, I wish you were either like this or like that. But instead of being like this or that, you're this wishy-washy type of person. Yeah, praise the Lord.

I mean, I like to praise the Lord, but I've got a lot of things to pursue in life, you know. I mean, it's alright to talk about all these things Sunday morning, but life on the earth has got many things we've got to pursue. Do you know the multitudes of lukewarm Christians that there are, and christened them today in churches? Churches are filled with lukewarm Christians.

Many of you may be like that. And do you know what the Lord says to you? I wish you were cold. I wish you would never come to this church.

I wish you would go right out into the world and say, I live for sin, I live for making money, I'm not a Christian. If you don't believe me, read God's word. I wish you were cold.

These are the words of Jesus himself. Or, if you don't want to be cold, be on fire for God. Be hot.

Where Jesus Christ is the number one passion of your life. Where you recognize that God sent you into this earth, not to live for yourself, but to live for Him. Not to make more and more riches, but to spread His love to other people.

Think of God's love for man. It says, God so loved the world that He gave His Son, when He sees people in sin. I think of this often, how Jesus sat in heaven.

What did love mean for Him? God so loved the world that He sent His Son, the Father and Son, in heaven. And seeing sin on this earth. And saying, we've got to do something about that.

We've got to do something for those people in that wretched condition. We've got to deliver them. They're going to hell.

They are living such miserable lives. Look at their family lives. Look at their home life.

Look how they're living. We've got to do something. Well, you've got to pay a price.

And the Father and Son talk about it. The Holy Spirit. Somebody has to go down and pay a tremendous price.

Come down as a man. That itself is a humiliation. For God to become a man, itself is a humiliation.

I don't know whether you know that. It's something like, I say, listen, would you like to become a worm? I mean a good worm. Nice looking worm.

Would you like to become a nice looking worm? How many of you would? I mean, if you want to reach out to all the worms in the world, and you say, well, I'd like to be a worm. That itself would be such a humiliation, right? Even if you're a healthy worm. So Jesus coming as a perfect man, I tell you, it's more than that.

For God to become a man, is itself such a humiliation. He took it. Leave alone all the other things that He suffered on earth.

We need to see that, that is what love meant. That they could not bear, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, could not bear to see man in this wretched condition without doing something about it. And I believe

that's the mark of love.

That I see people lost, and I say, Lord, there's something I have which I can give them. And I don't do anything about it? What would you think of a pharmacy here that's got a lot of stock of vaccines to cure a disease that's spreading all over this area? And they're storing up the vaccines for the price to go up? What would you think of such criminals? These guys out to make money when people are dying like flies all over? And what would you think of another pharmacy who says, listen, I don't want to make profit here, I've got enough money, let me give these medicines and save these people. This is a picture of two types of Christians.

Some who come to meeting after meeting and after meeting after meeting, like many of us, and stock up and stock up and stock up medicines. Knowledge of the word, knowledge of the word, never give it out to anybody. Are you like that? Or are you the other type of Christians who say, Lord, I've got with me medicines that can save people all around me.

I've got to give it out. I can't live for making money. I've got to live to save these people.

That's a mark of love. I tell you, it's a great grief to God that so many of His children have received so much from Him and have no burden to give it out to other people. Yeah, you have a burden.

That's one mark of love. I remember, I got that burden when I was converted. I said, Lord, you've done something for me, I've got to give it out to other people.

I have to give it out, I can't keep it to myself. And even though now I'm getting older, I still say, Lord, will you please give me another, at least another 20 years of health to travel and tell people about this wonderful message that Jesus can change their life, that Jesus can bring heaven into their life. That's, when it says God is love, that's what it means.

And I'll tell you this, I mean, you can hear a talk like this and say, I've got to do something about it. No, it's not going to be accomplished like that. You've got to ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit.

You know the disciples? Jesus said, listen, I know you're very sincere and all that, but I tell you, if you go out to serve me, you'll get discouraged pretty soon. Wait, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. When you're filled with the Holy Spirit, the love of God will flood your heart that you'll automatically go.

Nobody will have to give you a sermon. Thomas, the apostle, didn't come to India 1900 years ago because he heard a sermon. He got filled with the Holy Spirit, and he had a passion, he says, out there where these Arab Daos are going, they go there to bring the spices from India and they make money.

Maybe I should get on one of those Daos and take this wonderful message to those people in India. And he took that trip on that Arab Dao and paid his own fare. He didn't have anybody to support him.

Came to India without any money in 55 AD and brought people to Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit. He had a passion. Almost all the apostles were killed because he had a passion to take the gospel to other people.

I really believe we need to pray that God will fill us with the Holy Spirit. Fill us with the Holy Spirit, Lord. Give me this passion that you have.

This passion for love to reach out to others and a passion for fellowship with those whom you have brought into the church. May God help us. Let's bow our heads for a moment.

Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/11/SID11816.mp3>

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/Ldht2YEQVWE.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/love-and-fellowship/>

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