

Love in Two Directions

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of loving God wholeheartedly, understanding the depth of God's forgiveness, and being committed to building the church. It challenges believers to seek God fervently, prioritize spiritual growth over worldly pursuits, and be willing to sacrificially serve God like Noah and Elijah did.

Scripture: Matthew 22:37, Luke 7:47, 2 Peter 1:9, Ephesians 5:25, James 5:16, 1 Kings 18:21

Topics: "Wholehearted Love for God", "Commitment to Spiritual Growth"

Description

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Transcript

Having heard so many boring announcers in churches, it's a pleasure to hear Josh making announcements. Our service for the Lord must always arise out of gratitude to him for what he did for us. Then it'll never be a burden.

And so many of our questions will be answered because many of our questions are very irrelevant to the main thing. We don't need to know the answer to everything. Very often we are going to the tree of knowledge of good and evil to find out what is good and what is evil.

That is a picture of life under the law where this is right, that is wrong. Sometimes the question what people want to know is like children asking, how close can I go to the edge of the cliff without falling down? I say, stay far away from the edge of the cliff. Why do you want to find out? Or in a railway station in India sometimes, how close can I stand to the edge of the platform when the train comes in? You don't want to stand near the edge of the platform.

But those are the type of questions sometimes Christians are asking. Is this right? Is to go this far, is it right? I say, I want to stay as far away from evil as possible. And if something is doubtful, I'd avoid it.

And many of our questions are answered if we go to the tree of life. To me, those two trees in the garden are a picture of two ways of life. One is getting all the right answers, this is right, this is wrong, in the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

But God told Adam, it'll lead to death, spiritual death, even though you got the right answers. You're spiritually dead. There are lots of people who have the right answers, but spiritually dead.

Let me show you a verse in Matthew and chapter 23 of a bunch of people who went to the tree of knowledge of good and evil in Jesus' lifetime. They were known as the scribes and the Pharisees. And what Jesus said about them is very interesting.

The scribes and Pharisees, Matthew 23 verse 2, have seated themselves in the chair of Moses. They've got an authority. And listen to this.

He told his disciples, every single thing that they tell you to do, do. Now, would Jesus say that about a non-Christian religion, everything they tell you to do? Or even among Christian denominations, would he tell you to do everything that that particular denomination tells you to do? Well, some of the Christian denominations teach infant baptism. Would he tell them to do everything they tell you to do? Some don't believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Would Jesus say, everything they tell you to do, do? So here is a group that seemed to have everything correct in their doctrine. Everything that every I was dotted, every T was crossed. There was no mistake.

But he said, don't look at their lives. To me, this is the contrast. In verse 3, all that they teach is right.

They've gone to the tree of knowledge of good and evil and got correct answers, but they're spiritually dead. But don't do according to their life, because they say things, but they don't do them. That means they have no idea about spiritual life.

It's very important that we don't become like that, because these are the people who crucified Jesus Christ. People who had all their doctrines right, but they had their traditions. And I want to say to you, we can have all our doctrines right, and yet crucify Jesus Christ.

The Pharisees did it. Why can't it happen today? The letter kills, even if it is the new covenant letter. If you live according to the letter, you always want to find what is right and what is wrong, and you do what is the right thing.

It may not be what the Lord wants you to do. I'll give you some examples. To understand the life of Jesus is a very different thing.

Do you know that when Adam was in the Garden of Eden, he could go to the tree of life freely? He could walk right up to it if he wanted and take part. But today, you can't go to the tree of life freely, because we read in Genesis 3.24, there are cherubim, which means angelic beings, that go with a flaming sword, Genesis 3.24, to guard the way to the tree of life. And that sword speaks of death.

You want to get to the tree of life? Something has to die. That sword fell on Jesus Christ on the cross first. He opened the way of the tree of life, but we are to be crucified with Christ.

Like Paul says, I am crucified with Christ, and that's why I live. But not me. Christ lives in me.

So if I were to paraphrase Galatians 2.20, where Paul says, I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, but yet not I, but Christ lives in me. Christ lives in me. That's the tree of life, Galatians 2.20. But how did he get there? He got there by the sword which fell on Jesus, falling on Paul as well.

I am crucified, therefore I got to the tree of life, now Christ lives in me. Now the tragedy today is that so many Christians are trying to have the life of Christ without the sword falling on them. Can I somehow bypass this sword and get to the tree of life? Sorry, you can't.

This is not the Garden of Eden. Those days are over. Today there's a sword in front of the tree of life, and you can never get there without death to sell.

The Pharisees thought life came through an accurate study of right and wrong, right and wrong. They studied, studied, there were scribes who spent years studying this, and they knew the answers, but they called Jesus a devil. You know, everything in the Old Testament spoke about Jesus.

Genesis to Malachi. I'll show you that. You read in Luke's Gospel and chapter 24.

Luke 24, we read of the time when Jesus was walking to Emmaus with two disciples. If you read Scripture carefully, can you tell me how long that walk was? You've heard me before on this subject, you know the answer. How long was that walk? I would say about three hours, because it says in the first verse, I'm sorry, verse 13, Luke 24, 13, the distance was about seven miles, and in a relaxed walk, it would take about three hours to walk seven miles.

So Jesus was walking with these people for three hours, and it says during those three hours, you know what he talked about? Verse 27, beginning with Moses, that is from Genesis, the first book of Moses, through all the prophets, all the prophets means all the way to Malachi, from, paraphrase it, from Genesis to Malachi, in those three hours, he explained to them all the things concerning himself in every book. So every book of the Old Testament was referring to Jesus. He spoke to them, you remember in Genesis, it says the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head.

He says that's Christ. They didn't know he was Jesus, but he pointed out that's Christ. In Exodus, you remember the Passover lamb that was killed? That's Christ.

In Leviticus, you remember the sin offering? That's Christ. In Numbers, you saw the serpent lifted up in the wilderness? That's Christ. And so on all the way to Malachi, where it speaks about the son of righteousness, S-U-N, son of righteousness, that's Christ.

Everywhere, Isaiah 53, the serpent, the servant of the Lord, etc. So every book of the Old Testament pointed to Christ. And the people who studied the Old Testament most thoroughly in Jesus' time were the Pharisees and the scribes.

They studied the same book, same books, 39 books, and when the person whom those books spoke about came into their midst, you know what they called him? The prince of devils. Not just a good man, that itself they'd have been wrong. To go from Jesus explaining that this is the Messiah, Messiah, Messiah, Messiah, and they're studying the same books and saying this is the devil, that shows how blind you can be.

Even if all your doctrines are right, you will not be able to recognize Jesus, what he's trying to say or do in your life. That's what I learned from that situation. It's scary.

You can come to the tree of knowledge and get all the right answers and completely miss the way. What is it that the Pharisees rejected? Death to self. There's no way to come to the tree of life without that.

And I want to say to everybody sitting here, you can get all the answers. You can listen to these messages. You can listen to all the hundreds of messages of mine on YouTube.

And yet, in your life, you can crucify Christ. Sure, I believe that. There are lots of people who listen to my sermons all over the world who are not living a godly life.

They're getting information. Sometimes it's exciting information. There are people who are a little intellectually minded.

They say, oh, that's interesting the way it's presented. It's a very clever presentation of that truth. And they see something, oh, that's exactly what that verse means.

I never saw that in that verse. Oh, really? Is that what that verse means? I never realized it until Brother Zach explained it. And the guy is not interested in following Jesus in his daily life.

He's not interested in living in a godly way with his wife or husband or seeking to bring up his children in a godly way. He's not seeking to be free from the love of money or any such thing. He's not interested in sort of building a new covenant church.

No. He's interested in information and sometimes a little intellectual truth that's intellectually present that can stimulate people who are intellectual themselves with no desire to live a godly life. I say this as a warning.

But you can never go wrong if you say my primary desire is to love Jesus with all my heart and to love others as Jesus loved me. You will never go wrong if you make that your goal. Even if you can't explain some of the doctrines and you don't understand some of the doctrines, it doesn't matter.

So what I want to say is focus on the right thing in your life. Somebody once came to Jesus and asked him in Matthew 22. I need to say this to balance out because I believe in being accurate in understanding scripture.

And if you've heard me, you know how I try to quote scripture for everything I teach. But once when somebody came to Jesus and said, what is the great, Matthew 22, sorry, Matthew 22 and verse 36. Teacher, tell me what is the great commandment in the law? And you know, for those people, the great commandment was keep the Sabbath.

Don't do any work on the Sabbath. They got so upset with Jesus because he healed somebody and told him to carry his bed and go home. Or he healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath day and they got so upset.

That's breaking the Sabbath. They had no compassion for people who were sick. They wanted to keep the law.

There are many like that even today. And he did not speak about the Sabbath. Or for some people, the great commandment was circumcision.

If you're not circumcised, you're cut off from Israel. Jesus said it's not Sabbath, it's not circumcision. Matthew 22 verse 37.

The great greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. That is to love Jesus supremely. More than father, mother, brother, sister, wife, children.

More than my job, more than my house, more than my money, more than myself, more than anyone. To love Jesus supremely that no one will ever come between me and him. That when he tells me something, nothing else is going to take the place of that.

No personal interest will come between me and God's calling for my life. I love Jesus supremely. But he said, you asked me for one commandment, but I cannot give you just one commandment.

Because there's another commandment that comes on the other side of the coin. They are both on the same coin. And you can't have that coin with one side.

If it's only one side, it's a fake. When it says on one side, you've got to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. It says on the other side, the proof of that is you love your neighbor as yourself.

So on these two commandments, verse 40, depends the entire Old Testament. All 39 books of the Old Testament are teaching this. That's what he was saying in verse 40.

If you don't have this, you've got it all wrong. On these two pegs hangs the entire Old Testament and the entire New Testament. Love is the greatest.

So it's very important for us to evaluate ourselves with that light all the time. Am I seeking to live every day of my life with fervent love for Jesus Christ? I'll tell you honestly, this is how I seek to begin my day when I wake up in the morning. I want to talk to the Lord.

He's the lover of my soul. And like the bride speaks to the bridegroom in the song of Solomon, I seek to have that relationship with the Lord every morning of my life. And in everything, even in serving the Lord, I say, Lord, it's going to come out of love for you.

I would encourage you to do that. If you live like that, there will be no strain in your life. And I believe that is the meaning of what Jesus said in Matthew 11.

Turn with me there. Matthew chapter 11 and verse 29. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart.

You'll find rest for your souls. My yoke is easy. My burden is light.

You know, the Bible says about marriage, don't be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. The yoke is a picture of two bullocks plowing a field together. And the yoke is that wooden bar across the necks of the two bullocks.

And it's the senior bullock telling the junior inexperienced one, I'll teach you to plow a straight furrow if you listen to me and don't jump ahead, don't go lag behind. Let the yoke remain on your neck. Walk with me at the same pace and same direction and you will plow as straight a furrow as I am plowing.

This is the walk that Jesus walked. And it's a picture of marriage where Jesus is my bridegroom and I'm the bride and I want to walk with him. I don't want to go to any place where he would not go.

I don't want to do anything that cannot have his approval. I don't want to sit and watch a TV program where Jesus would get up and say, excuse me, I don't want to see that. I'm going away.

If he gets up and goes away, I say, Lord, I'm getting up and going away too. And I may be in somebody else's house and they're watching something and I don't feel Jesus would watch it. I'm not here to tell them don't do it.

They may call themselves Christians. I say, excuse me, I've got something else to do. And I do have something else to do.

I've got to walk away with my beloved. John Wesley was a man who would get up at five o'clock in the morning to go and preach to workers before they went to work. But in order to get up five o'clock in the morning, he had to go to sleep early.

So if he was talking to believers, a lot of interesting things, they're talking together about spiritual things at about nine o'clock, he'd say, I've got to meet somebody in the morning, excuse me, I have to go to bed now. He had to meet some very important person in the morning. And that was a priority for him.

There are people like that, you know, those are the people who accounted for God, for whom Christ is more important than any believer. Meeting with him and talking to him is the basis on which they live their entire lives. And that's why they accomplish so much for the Lord, while others just drifted along doing the bare minimum for the Lord.

I never want to be a bare minimum. You know, there are people who, what is the bare minimum for a happy married life? You want to know what is the bare minimum for a happy married life? You'll never have a happy married life if that's all you're seeking for. What is the minimum I have to do to keep my husband happy or my wife happy? You'll never have a happy married life.

In a truly happy marriage, it's not 50-50. No, it's 100-100. 100% this way, 100% that way.

There is no such thing as a 50-50 married life. It's the same way with Christ. There's no such thing as what is the bare minimum I have to do to go to heaven? What's the bare minimum I must do to keep my position in the church? What do I have to do to be a member of this church? What's the minimum? Tell me the minimum requirement.

See, there is no minimum requirement. Everything is maximum. And so, maximum means I want to walk with him all the time and I want to die to my own choice and my own preferences in every situation.

You see, that's a very demanding thing. It's like this junior bullock telling the senior thing, senior bullock, you mean I have to be under your yoke all the time? Can't I once in a while wander off by myself and try and plow a furrow on my own in this field? No, the senior bullock says, you'll go astray. You'll be all crooked.

Your furrow will be all crooked. You'll mess up this farm. You have to be under my yoke all the time.

But Jesus said, my yoke is easy. It's not like the law. The law is such a burden.

And you never know whether you kept all the law. The people who counted, there were 613 commandments in the Old Testament. 10 of them we know.

What we know is the 10 commandments. But the total was 613. And that's why they needed scribes to study it and study it and study it.

So that you had to go to check up with them. Have I kept all the law? Different things. But in the New Testament, there's no such thing.

The entire law has been replaced by the Holy Spirit. Moses went up to the mountain and came with all these 613 commandments. Jesus went up to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit and said, that replaces the law.

The Holy Spirit will tell you in each situation what you should do, what you should speak. It's an amazing way of life that we must learn to develop. Where I don't live by certain rules and regulations and certain answers I got in some question and answer session.

It's all right for little babies. You know, for a little child, you have to tell them, brush your teeth now. You must brush your teeth in the morning.

Must have a shower. Mustn't play with knives. Little, little things.

But as you grow up, you need less and less of these rules and regulations that we give to little children. Because they discover themselves that there are certain things. Their senses are developed to avoid what is bad and to do what is right.

So that is the way God wants us also to grow in the Christian life, where more and more my mind becomes aligned with the Holy Spirit. This is the real spirit-filled life, where I'm living by the tree of life, not by knowledge of what is right and what is wrong, but by the tree of life. And the only way to get there is by the sword falling on me.

And like I said earlier, the curtain, the other picture in the Old Testament of the curtain in front of the most holy place. In the tabernacle, there were three parts. The outer court, everybody could see, the holy place where the priests worked, and then the most holy place where it was only God.

And I look at this as Christians of three types. One who have just come through the gate, their sins are forgiven, and they like to, the huge crowd in the outer court, they like to mingle with, you know, there's a big crowd here of people who like to mingle with people whose sins are forgiven. We don't want, they're not unbelievers here.

People have come through the gate of the tabernacle, believers, you're fellowshiping with them, born again, they come to the altar where Christ is crucified. And then there are some others who will go a little beyond that to the holy place, which is a picture of those who want to serve God. The people in the holy place were the priests who did some service.

So there are some Christians who go beyond just attending meetings and fellowship. We want to do something for the Lord. And there in the holy place, the service, they're baptized in the Holy Spirit and anointed to serve, and they're doing something for the other.

But beyond all that is the most holy place. And there's no one there but God. And if you're not interested in God, that's a boring place to be in.

There's some people who always want to be with other believers. It's boring to be alone with God. How do you find it to be alone with the Lord? That's the most holy place.

And I don't mean just having a quiet time of prayer, prayer or something. Very often people pray to ease their conscience. Okay, I prayed so much.

I'm supposed to, as a Christian, I'm supposed to pray some amount. Okay, I eased my conscience. I did this.

That's over now. Let me get on with other things which are more important for me. What would you think of a husband wife relationship where a wife says, yeah, I've got to spend a little time with my husband every day, otherwise I'm not a good wife.

Okay, I've spent my half an hour with my husband. Okay, finished. Now I've got other things to do.

That's not the Christian life. Christian life is one where I'm in fellowship with Jesus Christ all the time. I want to live in the most holy place.

Everything I do is out from the holy place. I want to be with the Lord all the time. Everything I do, He's with me all the time.

I don't want to go to a place where He doesn't go. I don't want to watch something He doesn't want to watch. I don't want to read something He doesn't want me to read.

It's a wonderful life. That's how Jesus lived. He lived in fellowship with the Father continuously.

And that's the secret of the most wonderful life that this world has ever seen. And Jesus said, as the Father sent me into the world, I send you. That's how all of us are supposed to live, my brothers, by the tree of life, by understanding this.

It's called life in the Holy Spirit. That the Spirit of God leads me all the time. So I don't need so many answers.

I don't need, you know, question answer time and all is good. A certain amount we want some clarification of what the Bible says about divorce and remarriage and head covering and so many things. It's all okay, but you can have all those answers right and be spiritually dead.

So that's why I want to, I'm not against that. We had a question answer time, but beyond all that, I want to say it's fervent love for Jesus Christ that matters. And how shall I grow in that? And I've discovered two things that I would say.

First of all, 1 John chapter 4. 1 John 4, a very simple verse that we all know, 1 John 4, 19. We love Him because He first loved us. I don't love Him because I want to go to heaven.

I don't love Him because of any other reason or because He blesses me or does this, that, and the other for me. I love Him for one reason, because He first loved me. The Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.

So from that, I understand my love for Christ can increase only as I understand more of how much He loved me. That's how I found it in my own life. That I'm thankful that one from the beginning of my

Christian life, my life was centered around understanding what Jesus did for me on the cross.

What was the love that drove Him to the cross to die for me? And I spent years meditating on that. That's how I discovered one day that He was forsaken for me. That He experienced hell for me.

And that increased my love for Him. I remember the first time I ever saw that. I wept and wept and I wept and I wept.

I said, Lord, I never knew that You were willing to face all that for me. So we love Him because He first loved us. And that is something we have to discover more and more.

How much Jesus loved you. And the more you discover that spontaneously, love will come in your heart. You know how when you discover something which you never knew before.

You know, I remember hearing a story of a little girl telling her mother, Mom, everything about you is so beautiful. Your hands are so ugly. They're so gnarled and burnt and twisted.

Everything else is so lovely. How did you get hands like this? And the mother said, One day, you know, when I was in the other room, you went to the kitchen and your clothes caught fire from the stove. And you were burning when I came there and I used my hands to put out those flames.

And ever since that time, my hands have been like this. And that little girl hugged the mother's hand and said, Mom, you got the most beautiful hands. See, that's what happens when you discover.

Until then, she never knew that those hands were burned to save her life. And it's like that when we discover different aspects of the love of Jesus. I mean, I try to explain some things, but there's a lot more when you discover it.

We love Him because He first loved us. So if you want to love Jesus, ask God to show you how much He loved you. I'll tell you, I've been a Christian 60 years and that is still my prayer today.

I don't believe I've discovered the length and breadth and the height and the depth of that love. It's four dimensional. Turn with me to Ephesians in chapter, Ephesians chapter three.

It speaks of the four dimensional love of Christ. It's mentioned in verse 18 and 19. The breadth and the length and the height and the depth.

The breadth, length, height, and depth of the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge. And if you know that, then you'll be filled up to the fullness of God. So imagine I can be filled up to the fullness of God if I can understand this length and breadth and height and depth of the love of Christ, which I cannot understand with knowledge.

Surpasses knowledge means it's something you have to experience. It's something you've got to get by revelation in your heart and not something you hear a message, understand, oh, I see that's how Jesus loved me. Oh, that's the meaning of being forsaken on the cross for three hours, is it? And then analyze it.

What does that mean? And et cetera, et cetera. It's all intellectual. You can't love your wife intellectually.

You can't love your husband intellectually. That's not it. It's something of the heart.

And you have to get a revelation from God about how much he loved. And there's something interesting it says here that you can know this, that you can comprehend this, verse 16, verse 18, with all the saints. So that's one thing I've sought to do.

There are many wonderful saints of God whom I disagree with doctrinally. Those who pray to Mary or preach, take infant baptism and many things like that. But I found that some of these wonderful saints in other denominations, though I don't agree with their doctrines, some of them love Jesus fervently.

Some of these old Roman Catholic saints, boy, the way they love Jesus, I'm amazed. And I read some of their writings. Godly.

I read the writings of Madame Guillaume. She was a Roman Catholic. That's all there was in those days.

But I see a fervent love for Christ in her. And I see something there along with all the saints. I don't agree with her doctrinally.

But I see something there and I get a revelation on the love of God and I become more loving to Christ myself. So, you know, I'm not going to these saints to find out their doctrine. But whenever I see a person who loves Jesus fervently, I don't care whether he's from a Brethren background or a Pentecostal background or Roman Catholic background.

If he loves Jesus, if he loves my Savior fervently, I want to know more about that. With all the saints, I want to know the length and breadth and height and depth of the love of Christ to pass all knowledge. As I said, we have to be careful that we don't believe everything they believe.

I remember someone asking me, Brother Zach, why do you appreciate Mother Teresa so much? I said, I believe she'll be, she loved Jesus more than I do. She had no understanding of New Covenant and the body of Christ and all that. But that wasn't her calling.

But I can't say she was not a member of the body of Christ. Because if I want to know how to care for the poor and the downtrodden in a country like India, where there are millions like that, there's nobody who can teach me that better than Mother Teresa. If I'm only interested in living a comfortable life, just going to church on Sunday morning and making sure that I can live comfortably in a nice house and have a car and take care of all my children, get them educated well and get them to have good jobs, I don't need to go to Mother Teresa.

I can forget about her. I just ease myself. I got all the right doctrines.

But if I care for the people Jesus cared for, there's some things I can learn from her. See, she can't teach me about doctrine. I don't think she can teach me one thing about doctrine.

But she can teach me how to care for the poor and the downtrodden. And that's something that Jesus did. So it's like, I'd go to a heart surgeon for heart surgery.

But if I want to get my car repaired, I don't go to him. I go to an automobile mechanic. So if I want to know how to love Jesus, I can even go to someone who doesn't have all their doctrines right, but who expressed that tremendous love for Jesus by sacrificial devotion to God.

Or for example, if I want to be free from the love of money, I'm surrounded by a whole lot of Christians who think they love Jesus supremely, but they love money at the same time. They love money immensely, and

they don't even realize it. For example, it says in, talking about loving Jesus supremely, Jesus himself said in Luke's gospel chapter 16, it's quite a strong word when you think about it.

Not many people, I don't know whether you've heard a message on this verse, but it's a verse that's capable of a full sermon. Luke 16, verse 13. No servant can serve two masters.

And then you ask yourself, who are the two masters? Immediately we say, we know the answer. It's God and the devil. No, it is not.

It's God and money. He says that later on. God and mammon are wealth.

Those are the two masters. I mean, no one would imagine that he can serve God and Satan at the same time. Not at all.

But there are multitudes of born-again Christians who think they can serve God and money. They love money and God. And Jesus said, it's not possible.

He says here, either you will hate the one and love the other. That means, in order to love Jesus, I've got to hate money. Do you get any other meaning from that verse? Just be honest.

We've got to be very honest here. No servant can serve, let's put names there, Jesus and money. If you hate one, you love the other.

If I love money, I hate Jesus Christ. If I love Jesus Christ, I'll hate money. And you ask this question, do you mean I've got to actually hate money? Well, in the same sense that Jesus said, you've got to hate your father and mother.

In Luke 14, 26, he said, if you want to be my disciple, you've got to hate your father, mother, brother, sister, wife, and children, and your own life. What does it mean? In other places, it says, honor your father and mother. So what does it mean to hate father and mother? It means, compared to your love for me, your love for them must be so insignificant that like the stars disappear when the sun rises.

The stars become darkness. That's the meaning of that verse. That means, by all means, honor your father and mother and love them.

You must love your wife like Christ did love the church. But when compared to the your love for Jesus, it must disappear almost, like the stars disappear and Jesus is the sun that rises. So in that sense, I must hate money.

That means my love for money sort of disappears when I think of Christ. That's the meaning. So if I want my love for Christ to increase, there's so many other loves that I have that must go away from my life.

That means they've become dwindled to insignificance. Yeah, I still need to work to earn my living. We want to be very practical here.

But you know in your life where your interest in earning goes beyond taking care of your family and goes into a pursuit of money. Nobody else knows it, but you'll know it. And it's not just for survival.

You have plenty for survival. It is a covetousness for more, more. There are many ways in which we will pursue it.

Some people say, I don't want to have any more children because I want to give a huge inheritance to each of my children. Okay, if that's what God's called you to do, by all means do it. I'm not here to determine how many children you should have.

But don't let love of money determine that for you. I'm just telling you directly certain ways in which we fool ourselves that we love Jesus. And we wonder why God does not speak to us more clearly from his word.

Why doesn't God doesn't use us more in his service? Why don't we get revelation from heaven? He's a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. And when I seek him with all my heart, I will find him. He's got wonderful plans for me.

And for you, I want to say that. Turn with me to Jeremiah in chapter 29. In Jeremiah chapter 29, it says, and I believe this applies to us in our time as well.

Verse 11. Take this as a personal word from the Lord to you. Make it personal.

The Lord's speaking to you today. I have a plan for you, for you personally. Put your name there.

Plans to give you a tremendous future and a hope for your life, for your family, for your ministry. I have a great plan for you. And for that, you must come and call upon me.

It's not just going to be fulfilled if you just have a laid back attitude saying, oh, well, God's plan will be fulfilled. It will not. Nothing happens to those who are laid back.

Those who earnestly seek him, call upon me and you'll come and pray to me and I will listen to you. But you must seek me with all your heart. That means there's no room in your heart now for money or to please your parents or to please your relatives or to please people in your denomination or your pastor or somebody else.

There's no place for that. Now I'm loving Jesus with all my heart and I'm seeking him because I want to know what is his plan for my life and I will find him and I will be found by you. Verse 14 declares the Lord.

It's an amazing promise. I compare it to the way some people seek the Lord is like if you're walking down a grassy path one night and you lose a few coins, say a few quarters fell out of your hand. How long would you spend your time looking in the grass for those two or three quarters that fell out of your hand? A little while perhaps, two minutes, three minutes.

Then you'll move on. It's not even a dollar, just three quarters. But how long would you seek if you misplaced a bundle of \$100,000 that you were carrying with you and going from place to place, misplaced it somewhere? I think you'd spend a little more time looking for that.

And ask yourself how earnestly do you seek the Lord for anything? For being filled with the Holy Spirit or to seek for revelation on something in scripture or to seek that a good local church will be formed in the town where you live for the glory of God, not for your honor or glory, the glory of God. How earnestly do you seek? Well you say, well we prayed about it. We prayed a few times and now we leave it to the Lord when he wants to do something.

It's a very easy way to, you know, put the blame on somebody else. The Lord hasn't got a plan yet for this place. Uh-huh.

Or is it that you didn't seek the Lord earnestly enough? You shall seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart. We can easily fool ourselves that we've done everything right. Now the Lord has to do things in his own time.

He'll do it when I seek for him with all my heart. When I say Lord, when I look for you like I lost a bunch of \$500,000 I kept somewhere cash currency and I can't find it and I will not rest until I find it. I'm not going to seek for you like I seek for three quarters that I lost on the grass somewhere.

I'm going to seek you with all my heart. I want it. And throughout these 2,000 years there have been men and women who sought God like that and they found him.

And God's done a mighty work through them. And I want to say to you, my brothers and sisters, God wants to do that through every single one of us. You know, when I was young I used to read the biographies of missionaries.

That is one of my, I used to buy at least one book every month. They put my Christian bookshop and read it. I would encourage you to do it.

Read one good Christian book every month. Read some good Christian biographies. They challenged me tremendously to seek the Lord because I say, hey, these guys accomplished something for God on this lifetime on earth.

What am I going to do with my life? Just, I don't want to just drift along with the tide. I want to really accomplish something for God. I hope all of you have that desire.

I hope all of you will put that desire into the hearts of your children. That they'll accomplish something for the Lord in their life. For the Lord, for His church.

And you got to start early if you want to put that into your children. So I used to read these biographies and I used to be challenged by them. How they sacrificed everything.

I think of a man like William Carey who came to India and his wife was not willing to come. And he said, fine, God's called me. And he suffered so much for the Lord.

He lost some of his children with all the sickness that was there. But he laid the foundation for an amazing work for God in India. Translated the Bible into a number of languages.

I think of other people who went to places where there were cannibals. Way back in the 1800s, there were people who went out to different places. And who, there was one couple like that who left England and went by sailing ship to the Fiji Islands when there were cannibals.

And sailing ship those days. And when they reached the Fiji Islands and the captain of the ship said, what have you come here for? The couple said, young, 25 years old. He said, we come here to preach to these cannibals.

And the captain said, boy, you'll die if you go there. And they said, we died before we got under the ship. We died to all our own plans before we got under the ship.

Today we live for Christ. So I used to read biographies of men like this. And I said, Lord, what a way they lived.

They didn't make a lot of money or become famous in the earthly way. But what will it be? I think of the early martyrs, how they suffered for Christ. I think of a man who was a disciple of John the Apostle.

His name was Polycarp. And he lived up to the age of 90 or so. And the Romans came to capture him and took him before a magistrate and told him to deny Christ.

And he said, 86 years I've served my Savior. He's done me nothing but good. I cannot deny him.

And they burnt him. We're going to meet these people in eternity. We're going to sit in heaven talking about our testimonies.

And I'll meet many others like this. And they'll tell me what they did for the Lord. And what will I tell them? They say, let's hear what did you do for the Lord? Will I be ashamed in that day that I sought my own wherever I could, whatever was most convenient for me, wherever I could make the most money and also do a little bit for the Lord as well? I love him.

I'll go for an occasional conference and go for the meetings regularly. Is that going to be my testimony? I thought of that myself. I'm not here to judge you.

But I said, Lord, I don't want it to be like that. Not just for the sake of the testimony I give them, but I'm going to meet Jesus himself. We love him because he first loved us.

And I meditate more and more on that. The second thing the Lord showed me was from Luke chapter 7. I'm talking about the subject of how we can increase in our love for him. One, we love him because he first loved us.

And the other we read here in Luke chapter 7 of this woman who was a sinner, who all the money she had earned as a prostitute, she spent in buying an an alabaster, we read in Luke 7 37, a woman in the city who was a sinner. And my margin says an immoral woman, a prostitute. When she learned that Jesus was in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume.

And that's a very, very expensive thing. You know how even a small bottle of perfume, how much it costs. She brought a whole vial of perfume, a whole bottle full of perfume.

Where did she earn that money? She earned it as a prostitute. Her life savings as a prostitute. She went and bought perfume and she came to Jesus' feet and poured it out of Jesus' feet.

The Pharisee, verse 39, who saw it said, if this man were a prophet, he would know what type of sinner this woman is. You know, there is a law in the book of Deuteronomy that says a prostitute cannot bring her earnings and give it as an offering to God. There's a verse like that in Deuteronomy.

A prostitute was not allowed to give an offering from her money to God. The Simon knew that, this Pharisee. He said, here this woman is pouring it out of the feet of Jesus, giving an offering to Jesus.

And Jesus accepted it. It's amazing. Didn't Jesus know that law? Of course, he himself gave it to Moses from heaven.

He knew the law, but he was not a legalist. He knew the love that was in the heart of this woman. And so he tells Simon, verse 47, her sins which are many have been forgiven for she loved much, but he who is forgiven little, loves little.

So that's the other thing I discovered. How to love more. The more I discover how much I've been forgiven, the more I will love.

The less, now nobody's been forgiven little. Nobody. There's not a single person in this room who can say, the Lord's forgiven me very little.

Nobody. It's a question of awareness of how much we've been forgiven. The one who feels, I've been forgiven only little, will love little.

And so he'll sacrifice little. He'll always be thinking, what is the minimum I have to do to keep God happy? What's the minimum I have to do to keep the church happy? What's minimum I have to do to have a good testimony before others that I'm a good Christian? Always the minimum. What's the minimum I have to do to keep these commandments? And always, you know, many questionnaires are like that.

I said, how close can I go to the edge of the cliff without falling over? So many questions people ask me. I'm divorced. Can I get remarried again? So many things.

He who thinks he's been forgiven little, will love little. And will sacrifice a little. He'll always be thinking, oh, I have to do something for the Lord.

What's the minimum I have to do? But he who recognizes that he's been forgiven much, will love much. So what's the first we need to do? How much Jesus loved me? We love him because he first loved us. The second thing we need to know is an awareness of how much we have been forgiven.

And sometimes we forget that. And we become spiritually blind. Turn with me to 2 Peter in chapter 1, verse 9. He's talking about certain qualities in the previous verses, like verse 5, moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, verse 6, et cetera.

And then he says, verse 9, he who lacks these qualities, 1 2 Peter 1 verse 9, is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten, what has he forgotten? His purification from his former sins. It's very easy to forget how much we have been forgiven. And when we forget how much we've been forgiven, or we think we've been forgiven very little, we become spiritually short-sighted.

We become, it says, blind. And what happens is such a blind man tries to read the scripture, he doesn't get much out of it. I've been studying the Bible for 60 years.

And I'll tell you honestly, even now, God speaks to me. Things that I never saw. It's an amazing book.

It's like a well that never runs dry. I've been drawing water from it for 60 years, and there's still water there. Do you find the Bible like that, or do you find the Bible to be a boring book? It's a pretty good test of whether you're blind or short-sighted, or whether your eyes are being opened.

I find like that myself. If a day ever comes in my life when I think, oh I know the scriptures, there's nothing more that the Lord can talk me through. My love for the Lord is gone.

And I fear that has happened to many, many believers, possibly to some of you sitting here. The Bible has become a boring book. It's no longer, remember the early days when you were converted first? How you used to go to scriptures every day, read it, read it, ask God to speak to you.

And those days are gone. The Lord had to tell an elder in a church, you have left your first love. You didn't reject it.

He hasn't divorced, but he's just left it. It's no longer that fervent love has cooled off. And that has happened to many, many believers, and they're trying to build a church.

How can you build a church? He says, Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. And when I say, Lord, I want to build a church, well the Lord says, you've got to love the church and give yourself for it. Are you willing to give yourself completely? I'll build my church through you.

But if you've got another agenda and many other programs in your life, go right ahead and do it. And as a small addendum to all your main things in life, I also like to build a church. It doesn't work like that.

Paul would never have accomplished what he set out to accomplish if his main job was making tents. He made tents to earn his living, like all of you got some jobs to earn your living. But if you were to ask Paul, what are you doing? He wouldn't say I make tents, even though that was his profession.

That's how he was earning his living. Just like you may say, I'm a teacher or I'm a nurse, and that's how I'm earning my living. Well, that's not what Paul said, even though that was the way he was earning his living.

He said, I'm an apostle. The Lord's called me to build a church. And I want to say to you, my dear brothers and sisters, as an earning, self-supporting person, you and I are called to build a church.

In some way, some part, you may not be called to be an apostle, but in some way to help building a church. But for that, I have to give myself for it. I remember asking the Lord, what is the condition to build a church? And the Lord referred me to this verse in Ephesians 5. Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.

And those are the only ones who build a church, Ephesians 5, 25. When I say, Lord, all that I have and all that I am is for you. I have no personal agenda in my life.

I have no program of my own. You have loved me so much. You have forgiven me so much.

And I want to love you with all my heart. This is the real Christian life. And I want to say, brothers and sisters, I believe the Lord's looking for such as we approach the end of time, closing days of this age.

The world is going into more and more wickedness, like Jesus said, the days of Noah. The last days will be like the days of Noah. You remember how it was in the days of Noah? There were two primary evils in the days of Noah.

If you read in Genesis chapter 6, a tremendous amount of what I would call terrorism, murder, all types of things, this violence, what today we would call terrorism, days of Noah. And the second was sexual evil, perverted sexual evil. The angelic beings were coming and possessing people to have sex with women.

Perverted sex and violence were characteristic of the days of Noah. And you can see that in the newspapers and in the news every day, somewhere or the other. But in the days of Noah, there was a Noah.

That's the other thing we must remember, not just the evil part, but there was a witness for God. And so as the days become like the days of Noah in the world, God wants people like Noah, you and me, to be like Noah, who was called a preacher of righteousness. And he preached for 120 years.

And the only people who were converted were his own family. That's the other thing I saw, that in the last days, and the world drifts like the days of Noah, there'll be a few like Noah who got a godly family. This is Noah, who supported Noah 100% in building the ark.

He trained up three of his children, and they were not small babies. They were grown-up men, more than hundreds of years old, but Noah himself was 600. Trained all three of them, grown-up men, who loved God like their father and helped them in building the ark.

God wants people like that. Families that build the church, father, mother, and children. Are you going to be one of them? Or you just say, well, the days of Noah are like the evil days of sex and violence.

That's how it is going to be in the world. What about people like Noah, who also are needed by God in the last days? That's you and me. That's why your family life is important.

That's why you need to bring up your children in the fear of God from the earliest possible time. Yes, you must teach them to have a profession of their own, so they don't become beggars. But if they just earn their profession and nominally go to a church, you'll be a failure.

You're not in the footsteps of Noah, because his children got active in building the ark. And if I were living in Noah's time, I would invest everything I have in building the ark. Because I know that's the only thing that will remain when the world collapses.

Do you believe the church is the only thing that's going to remain when the world collapses? You'd be investing your time and energy to build a church. It's time and energy that God needs more than money. I've seen that in all the many, many scores and scores of churches that God's planted now in 10 or 11 countries in these last past 40 years.

We've never taken an offering in a single church, not in the poorest villages of India, not in the big rich cities. We don't take an offering because we wanted to prove. We keep an offering box.

It says Jesus sat next to the offering box when the widow put two mites in, and so we keep an offering box. But we never tell people to give money. We say God's work is dependent on people who love him with all their hearts.

And whatever money they give, you can use that. That's enough. But no pressure.

You must give, you must give zero. We've never taught typing in our whole life. I work with 150 elders in all these churches.

Not one of them has received one cent in salary for their services. I've never received one cent in salary in all the 40 years I've served my local church. Like Paul, we don't work for salary.

We want to build the church. Noah didn't work for salary. When the Lord told him to build the ark, he didn't say, Lord, who's going to pay for it? You think it's easy to build a ship? If he had asked that question, what do you think the Lord would have told Noah? You, Noah, who else is going to pay for it? You pay for it yourself.

Go and sell some of your land. I blessed you with a lot of land. Go and sell some of it and build the ark.

Do you really believe what I'm saying, that the world is going to be destroyed? And this ark is the only thing that's going to remain? That's what the Lord's asking us today. Do you really believe the world's army is going to be destroyed? And the church is the only thing that's going to remain for all eternity? Commit yourself to it. Many are not honest in what they say they believe.

Lord, I want to protect my own interests. Of course, I'll do a little bit for the church as well. I want a little reputation that I'm doing something for the church.

And I want a little reputation that I'm building a new covenant church, not like all these other ones. But I'm going to safeguard my reputation and my interests. That's very important.

I'll tell you now itself, you'll build nothing that lasts for eternity. You'll ease your conscience, gather with a few people, and there'll be nothing to it. You seek God with all your heart, you'll find him.

You can't play games with God, my brother and sister. He's a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much.

And then it goes on in James to speak about Elijah. You know, in Elijah's time, the Lord told Elijah, there are 7,000 people who have not bowed the knee to Beal. Praise the Lord.

While all of Israel was bowing the knee to Beal, there were 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Beal, but not one of them could bring fire down from heaven. Why was that? There was only one man who could bring fire down from heaven. There was only one man who could turn Israel to God and make them bow down and acknowledge that Jehovah is God.

The other 7,000, their testimony was negative. I don't bow to Beal. Today also there are people with a negative testimony.

I don't smoke. I don't drink. I don't gamble.

I don't cheat. It's all negative. I don't do this.

I don't fool around with other women. I don't do this. I don't do that.

I don't bow the knee to Beal. None of them can bring fire down from heaven. It was Elijah who brought down fire down from heaven because his testimony was not, I don't do this and I don't do that.

His testimony, Tehav, was I live before the Lord God of Israel, before his face. And I believe God needs men and women like that. And you can be one like that.

Elijah was an ordinary person whom God picked up. And you may be a very ordinary brother. There's absolutely no partiality with God.

I'll tell you that. If you find the fire of God on someone and not upon yourself, you can be pretty sure there's a reason for that. That he sought God with all your, all his heart.

And you were more careful to save God your own interests and sort of seek God the minimum necessary. Let's change our ways. And say, Lord, I want to love you with all my heart.

I want to know how much you love me. And I never want to forget how much you've forgiven me. My whole life must be an expression of gratitude for all that you've done for me.

May God help us. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we'll never know on this earth how much you loved us.

Help us to have a little glimpse of that, so that we may not waste our one earthly life you've given us. Make us the men and women you want us to be. We know that there's no partiality with you and what you've done for others you can do for us.

Lord, lead us into a fiery baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire. That you set us aflame to be witnesses for you on this earth in these last days. We pray in Jesus' name.

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