

# Loving Jesus Is Most Important

by Zac Poonen

---

*Zac Poonen emphasizes that loving Jesus passionately and obeying His commandments is the essence of the Christian life.*

**Duration:** 1:01:12

**Scripture:** 1 John 4:19

**Topics:** "Loving Jesus", "Christian Devotion"

---

## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of loving Jesus passionately with all our hearts, highlighting the need to meditate on His love for us and to remember our own sins and His forgiveness. It stresses the significance of being forgiven much, leading to a deep love for Jesus and a willingness to serve and sacrifice for Him and others. The speaker encourages a life of humility, forgiveness, and devotion to Christ, rooted in a profound understanding of God's love and grace.

---

## Transcript

As we come to the closing session, we want to think about what the Bible says is the most important thing in the Christian life. You know, we look at many things, many different subjects, and they're all part of one big whole. There was a question earlier asked about what is the difference between being in Christ and walking with the Lord.

You know, these are all word pictures. With a scientific mind, we try to pigeonhole these things as if they are different things. They are not different things.

We look at them differently, but they are all part of one whole. To be in Christ, for Christ to be in us, to be a part of a body, or part of a building, where Christ is the foundation, or part of a body where Christ is the head. In a building, the foundation doesn't control the bricks, but in a body, the head controls the fingers and the members.

So, they are different illustrations because the totality of the Christian life cannot be expressed with one illustration. And that's why the New Testament uses so many pictures. You're the salt, and you're the light, and we are in Christ.

Christ is in us, and we are to walk with the Lord, and we are to walk like the Lord, and we are to run behind the Lord. He was our forerunner, and we are to look up, to our Lord, who is at the right hand of the Father.

If you think only one of these is true, we've got this pigeonhole type of mind.

It is not like that. That's why the Bible says, Jesus said, I thank you, Father, that you have hidden these things from the clever and the intelligent, who try to analyze everything scientifically. And you reveal them to simple babes.

You know, I find that when I go to the villages in India, they don't have these questions. They don't have all this analysis, because they don't have this scientific type of pigeonholing everything. But even for those who are scientifically minded, I mean, I would say, it's something like this.

Take a thing like sulfuric acid. Sulfuric acid consists of two atoms of hydrogen, one atom of sulfur, and four atoms of oxygen. If I remember my chemistry right from about 50 years ago, it's H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>.

Now you can study hydrogen, the qualities of hydrogen, and the characteristics of it. You can study the qualities of sulfur, and the qualities of oxygen. You breathe oxygen, but you better not breathe sulfuric acid, even though it's four atoms of oxygen.

See, you can look at oxygen separately, and sulfur separately, and hydrogen separately, but that's not sulfuric acid. There's a simple example. You look at sodium, and you look at chlorine, and that's not salt.

You put it together, you get salt. So that's a little weak illustration of how we look at many, many different things in the New Testament. And when put together, that is true Christianity.

And that's what it means to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ. But if you take one word picture, it may clash with another. Is Jesus a shepherd? Or is he an elder brother? I mean, the shepherd and sheep are two different kingdoms.

Shepherd is a human being, and a sheep is not a human being. But an elder brother and a younger brother, we are human beings. So we mustn't make too much of one picture as if that is everything.

That's a little principle you must bear in mind, those who tend to analyze. It's very easy to, you know, for our soul to develop and hinder our Christian life. Adam went to the tree of knowledge and went astray.

Knowledge always brings death. It's life, the tree of life that he should have gone through. God's word has not been given to us for analysis.

God's word has been given to us to teach us how to relate to God and how to relate to one another. So when somebody came to Jesus and asked him, what is the great commandment of the law? He said in Matthew 22, that was a question that somebody asked him. And Jesus' reply was this, you know, I think they had the idea, they were all legalists, and they thought the most important thing is keeping the Sabbath.

But Jesus didn't even refer to the Sabbath. You know, there can be sometimes people who are godly, who got a sort of a quirk, go off on a tangent on some particular doctrine, and that becomes like a bee in the bonnet. You know what a bee in the bonnet is? A bonnet is like a hat these women used to wear, and if you've got a bee inside it, it's always buzzing, buzzing, buzzing, buzzing, you can't hear anything else.

And that's an expression in English where it says that you can't think of anything else except this one thing. I remember once I was visiting a God-fearing brother in the United States, who belonged to a particular group that emphasized women dressing modestly, and waving their heads 24 hours a day, etc. I

mean, we had a lot of respect for each other, I've spoken in his church, and after a long time I was meeting him.

I just visited him for a few minutes. And what do you think he wanted to talk to me about? You'd think that we'd talk about Jesus. No.

He said, Brother Zak, what is this I hear that you are teaching that women do not have to wail their heads for 24 hours, and they only need to wail their heads in the meetings. That's not exactly the most exciting subject I wanted to talk about. But anyway, since he asked that question, I said, okay, I'll tell you brother.

I said, you teach, and I saw how these women wail their heads there. They don't wail it completely, because it's too hot to wear it all the time. So they gradually move the veil back, back, back, back, back, and finally just cover the bun on top of their head, and cover that 24 hours.

You know, backsliding, it's exactly like that. Okay, so I told him, I said, brother, what is the difference between you and me? You tell people to cover the back part of their head, 15% of their head, which is sometimes only their hair, and wear it 24 hours. I tell people to cover their whole head in the meetings only, when they pray and prophesy.

But I'm not going to be a legalist and fight about these things. These are not the important things for me. See, and that is one of the most God-fearing brothers I've met in the United States.

See, this is how you can go off on a tangent, that you meet a brother, and all you can discuss is some little thing of doctrine. What is the most, these Pharisees were like that. What is the great commandment? What shall we discuss? The Sabbath.

Jesus refused to get involved in that. So he said, I'll tell you. This is verse 36, Matthew 22.

Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? Verse 36, Matthew 22. He said, I'll tell you. Which are the ten commandments? He didn't mention any of them.

He mentioned in a summary what all of God's commandments were meant for. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. And the second is like you love your neighbor as yourself.

You can't get it more straight than from Jesus' own mouth. The greatest thing in the Christian life is to love God with all your heart. Or like somebody was saying yesterday, to love Jesus passionately.

That is the greatest thing in the Christian life. And Jesus says, but this is not by itself. If you do that, you will automatically love your neighbor as yourself.

And you will love in the church. Neighbor means everybody in the world. And Jesus added one more commandment for us in the church.

You love one another in the church as I love you. You love everybody in the world as yourself. But in the church, the love is going to be stronger.

A new commandment, you love one another as I have loved you. That is the greatest thing. Now, somebody may say, but Brother Zach, yesterday you said that when you're a child, you say you love Jesus.

When you're grown up, you say Jesus loves me. I'm not talking about our testimony. I'm talking about what we do.

I'm not here to tell you, I love Jesus passionately. You'll never see that in scripture, any apostle saying that. They love Jesus passionately.

Jesus asked Peter, do you love me? And he, Peter didn't give that reply to John. He gave it to Jesus. Tell Jesus, Lord, I love you passionately.

I'll tell you why I'm saying this. It is the most important thing in the Christian life. I say it many times to the Lord.

Like the song of Solomon, the bride tells the bridegroom, she doesn't go around telling everybody else, hey, I love the bridegroom passionately. But she tells the bridegroom, it is the most important thing in the Christian life. And that's where I love these songs that some of these mystics, many of them were Roman Catholics, who wrote.

Many times I sit in my room and sing those songs. Sometimes I'm walking down the road or lying in the bed. I sing these wonderful songs.

My God, how wonderful thou art. Thy majesty, how bright. How beautiful thy mercy seat in depths of burning light.

And songs like this, show me thy face, O Lord, one transient gleam of loveliness divine. I shall never think or dream of other loves, save in thine all lesser light will darken quite. All lower glories wane.

The beautiful of earth will never seem beautiful again. Many songs like that of devotion. We must all have times like this of devotion to Jesus by ourselves.

This is true worship. I can never worship God in a crowd. It's not possible.

I can praise God in a crowd and I can thank God in a crowd and have songs of praise and thanksgiving. But songs of worship, I can only sing to God alone to really mean it. You see, for example, I see all these sentimental songs that nowadays written by these modern half converted cowboys who wrote, used to write love songs in their unconverted days and have just given a little twist to it and directed it towards Jesus.

Hold me close. Never let me go. Who are you talking to? They used to, they were saying that to some girl in the old days.

Now they just, they don't even put the name of Jesus there. There's something sentimental about it. Oh, I love him more and more.

You know, whenever I sing that, I sing it a little differently. I'll obey him more and more. I love him more and more.

I'll obey him more and more. Sing it like that and see it makes a difference. Because Jesus said, if you love me, you will keep my commandments.

And I don't want to fool myself that I'm passionately loving the Lord. If I'm not passionately obeying God's commandments, there are two marks that I love Jesus passionately. One, that I keep all his commandments.

I have a passionate desire to obey every single thing that God's word says, whether it's a small thing, like teaching women to cover their heads, or whether it's a big thing, like being by forgiving all those who hurt me. It doesn't make a difference to me. If I believe, either I believe this is God's word, or I don't believe it's God's word.

I believe it's God's word. And if there's a single thing, big or small, in God's word, I love Jesus, I keep his commandments. I don't care what people think about it.

Secondly, I, but I won't be a legalist. You see, I can take some small commandment and compel people to live according to my light, I don't do it. I sometimes preach in churches in the United States, where there are 2000 people sitting there and 1000 women, none of them cover their heads, my subject is not covering your head, my subject is holiness.

So we got to be wise in all these things, you can have a bee in your bonnet, where something is the most important thing for you. And that's not the most important thing in the Christian life. What is the greatest commandment? Love God with all your heart.

But you can't force a person, some people haven't seen some commandments, you can't force them to see it. It's only when they see it, they can obey it. That's why the Bible also says, don't judge somebody else, you do it yourself.

What is the difference between discipline and legalism? Discipline is where because of my love for Christ, I have disciplined my body in certain areas, maybe in the amount of sleep I have, the amount of food I eat, and keeping myself fit, perhaps, and reading the Bible and studying the scriptures. These are disciplines, which you cannot live a holy life if you're not disciplined. Discipline in the way you spend time on different things.

Discipline, I still feel a lot of areas in my life, I need to be more disciplined. But I'm working towards it slowly. Discipline in the amount of time we spend on the internet and discipline the amount of time we've spent reading newspapers and other books and even in listening to music.

I feel there are a lot of young people today who don't have time to read the Bible, but have time to listen to what they call Christian rock, which is imitating the worldly rock music. It is not originally Christian, it didn't come from the Holy Spirit, they saw something in the world. And they imitated it and put Christian words to it to try and attract the young people.

Do you think that Jesus tried to attract the young people in that day by seeing what worldly people were doing the Greeks and the Romans and say, let me reach people like that. No, he depended on the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has been replaced by a music today.

The Holy Spirit has been replaced by money. Why is it there's so much emphasis on money today in Christian work, but no emphasis on money in Christian work in the New Testament. They had emphasis on the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit has been replaced by money, music and psychology today. You got to be very careful. And that's why you have a generation of young people growing up in many churches, including many young people in our midst, who are taken up with what they call Christian rock, trace the source of it.

That's what I want to know. Always take the source, a good doctor will not just look at a fever. He said, Where does that fever come from? It comes from tuberculosis.

Don't just give him a cross in and get rid of the fever, deal with the root. So when you think of Christian rock, please trace it to its root, you'll find it's not the Holy Spirit. It's worldly, demonic, rock musicians and the Christians try to imitate them with wearing vests and black dress and black strummy guitars and all that.

And you watch these Christians, they don't overcome sin in their life. They don't have time for the Bible. They spend hours practicing their guitars and listening to these worldly rock musicians and trying to imitate that in their own life.

No, all I'm saying is not it's not godly. I cannot imagine Jesus when he was 15 years old, listening to that type of thing, even if you such things were there in his day. And you really want to follow Jesus.

This is not the way to reach the world. I'll tell you that people ask me what do you think of Christian rock? I say Christian rock. That's like asking me what I think of Christian adultery.

Christian adultery was that adultery between two Christians? Christian murder? What's Christian murder? What is Christian stealing? What is Christian rock music? There is no such thing. So I'm just saying that, you know, all this sentimental stuff, today's music is so much of sentimentality. If you compare the music written by people today compared to the music written 100 years ago and 200 years ago by people like Charles Wesley, and Fanny Crosby and all those people, you'll see one fundamental difference.

They wrote hymns of tremendous devotion to Christ and of service that drove people to the mission field and sent people to preach the gospel and sacrifice. Today's musicians, they write about three lines, which you sing about 10 times. If you don't believe me, look at the song you sing, three lines, they don't have any more inspiration.

And most of those lines are, I love him, I love him, I love him, the lines itself have repetitions. And then you repeat that 10 times or something like that. There's no, and do you know that another difference, Charles Wesley didn't make money from his music, from his songs.

Today's musicians produce CDs and produce millions. Now I want to ask you all a straight question. If you have a preacher here, who does not take money for his preaching, but preaches really sincerely seeking the glory of God, and another preacher who wants to make money out of his sermons and out of his books, you tell me, which of these two do you think would have a word from God? The first one or the second one? Okay, you're sure? Okay, now here we have two musicians, one who did not write any of his songs to make money and never made many money.

And here's another musician who wrote his songs and produced CDs to make millions. Which of these things, which of these songs do you think will be inspired by God? Give me a right answer. And you'll know why I'm not so fascinated by today's music.

Money is the greatest opposite to God. And the thing is, many of you don't have discernment. You say it sounds so nice.

What sounds so nice? The beat. And that's why your Christian life is so shallow. And that's why your children go astray.

I want to tell you straight, I'm holding you to the highest. It may take time to get there. Now you may be passing through a phase where you young people want to, you know, appear like they say cool and accepted with your friends, that's fine.

All I want to say is, when Jesus was 15, he did not want to appear cool and accepted with his friends. What shall I hold up to you? The standard of some third rate, half converted cowboy, or the standard of Jesus when he was 15 years old. That's the only one standard we hold up in the church.

I'm not going to condemn you. I'm not saying you shouldn't come to the church. I'm telling you this is the standard we preach in the church.

Whether you're five years old, 10 years old, you see the footsteps of Jesus as a five year old, as a 10 year old, as a 15 year old, see the footsteps of Jesus when he was 20 years old. He was tempted in every single point as we are. And the Bible says, you know, the Bible not only says this is the secret of godliness in 1 Corinthians and sorry, 1 Timothy and chapter three, the secret of godliness is that Christ came in the flesh and was pure in his spirit.

No human being from the time of Adam had the flesh could keep his spirit righteous and pure. Nobody, the first person who came in flesh with a will of his own when I say flesh, I don't mean he had sinful lusts. He did not have sinful lusts.

There was no sin in him. But he had what is the root from which sin comes out in all of us, which is my will. All sin comes out of my will.

Did Jesus have a thing called my will? Of course he had. And it was something he had to deny. In the garden of Gethsemane, he said not my will, but your will.

What does that mean? That means Jesus will was against his father's will. That's what we call the flesh. The definition of flesh is my will.

Jesus had it. And he denied it, not just in Gethsemane, he denied it in all the days of his flesh with loud crying and tears. And it's this my will that you see in a two year old child who refuses to yield to the commands of his parents is there.

That's what Jesus denied. He denied it when he was five years old. He denied it when he was 10 years old.

He denied with 1520 all the way to 33. And at the end of it, he said it is finished. I've denied my will in every single possible area that any human being can be tempted to do his will.

He denied it. That's what he meant when he said it's finished. And that's when the veil of the temple was torn.

And Hebrews 10:20 says that veil is a picture of Jesus' flesh, which is my will. It was torn from top to bottom, which means Jesus did it by the power of God, the Holy Spirit. And you and I can't do it.

It wasn't torn from top to bottom to top. Some of us are doing it. That's legalism.

Try and tear the veil from the bottom to the top. You can't do it. It has got to be torn from the top to bottom.

God has to do it. God has to give us the power of the Holy Spirit to walk this way. The way into the most holy places already open.

You don't have to rent that veil again. But we have that flesh which Jesus had, which we must by the power of the Holy Spirit walk this new and living way to go the way Jesus went. And it's not a theory.

If you're walking that way, it's not seen by you're talking about it. It's seen by the fact that people will see you becoming more and more Christ-like every year, more and more gracious, more and more gentle. When people in CFC who've known me for 33 years say, Brother Zach has changed.

I'm not ashamed of that. I say, I hope I've changed. I was pretty legalistic 30 years ago.

And if I have not changed in 30 years, I should hang my head in shame. Now, I don't expect a young person, 15 year old to have the maturity that I have at 69. No, that's like saying if a 10 standard student looks down on the first standard student and say, Hey, why don't you know calculus? Who's the fool? The 10 standard student.

How can you expect a first standard student to know even geometry? Leave alone calculus. And if you as a 60 year old or 50 year old expect a 14 year old to have the maturity you have, I'm sorry to say, brother, you're the fool. Sister, you're the fool.

They won't have your maturity. But sin is the same. When a three year old says no to his father, that is sin.

I mean, he may not have maturity, but he's got sin. I don't expect a child to be suddenly six feet tall, but I expect him to be healthy, even if he's only two feet tall. Health is what we require from our young people, not maturity.

Maturity may take a long time, but they'll never be healthy if they are following the examples in the world. So when we talk about love for Jesus in all these modern choruses and all, you have to be very careful. Some of them are excellent, but some of them are written by these half converted cowboys who don't know Jesus.

It's sentimental love ballads, which they used to sing in their unconverted days to men and women, to other boys and girls. Now they think that they know it's a frothy, a frothy, sentimental love for Jesus, which does not make them obey God's commandments. Which does not make them fervently love others.

And that is why you see that the hymns that people sang years ago made many of them leave their countries and come to difficult lands like India as missionaries. My wife and I know a very godly missionary lady was about 85 or 90 years old now who came to India as a young 25 year old nurse, worked in the deserted villages in Maharashtra. That's where my wife went to work with her in among lepers, a village infested with cobras and lepers and no roads, no electricity.

No running water. And here was a young 25 year old nurse from America came there along with others and built buildings there would take the leper babies and keep 25 years old, like some of you young girls at 25 gave up marriage, but it was take care of the leper babies and brought many of those people to Christ. She didn't grow up singing sentimental love songs to Jesus.

Her love for Jesus was manifested in sacrifice and a tremendous passion like Jesus had to come from heaven to this earth to give other people the gospel. But all these fellows who are singing these songs today in the United States and other places, you don't see them coming with that type of missionary passion today. That missionary passion has gone.

What are they doing? They are singing sentimental love songs. And what are their leaders? These charismatic leaders who teach people to sing these songs, what are they doing? They never come here to these jungles of India and Africa. No.

They go to the posh amphitheaters in America and charge \$10,000 per evening to preach a message and they'll arrive there in their helicopters, preach the message and go away. What a difference between today's preachers and which you see them on television and you open your mouth and say, oh, what a man of God. I'll tell you who is a real woman of God, woman like that, 90-year-old lady.

I have a hundred times more respect for them than all these modern preachers. These modern preachers are being brought up in the so-called Christian rock and all this rubbish with sentimental love for Jesus. I want to tell you, my brothers and sisters, this is the truth I preached 33 years ago is the truth I preach today.

We haven't changed the standards in the church. We don't judge anyone. If you want to go that way, you can go.

God himself doesn't stop people from going to hell. So we can't stop you from being carnal. We can't stop you from being worldly.

When God doesn't stop people from going to hell, do you know how many millions went to hell yesterday? Do you know within the three days that we had this conference, how many people God allowed to go to hell in the world? He didn't stop any of them. He didn't catch them by the neck and say, hey, don't go to hell. And I'm not going to catch anybody by the neck and say, stop listening to Christian rock.

No, no, no, go ahead and listen to it. There's a verse in the Bible that says, be filthy. There's a verse in the Bible that says, be unrighteous.

Can you imagine a holy book teaching us to be unrighteous and filthy? Turn to Revelation 22, verse 11. It says here, if you're doing wrong, please continue to do wrong. You'd think that is in some book written by the devil.

No, this is the inspired word of God written by the Holy Spirit. And he says here, those who are doing wrong, please continue to do wrong. Those who are filthy, continue to be filthy.

That means become more filthy, do more wrong. You think John didn't hear that right? John, did you hear God correctly? Yes, sir. He heard God correctly.

Let the one who does wrong, continue to do wrong. Let the one who is filthy, continue to be filthy. I never understood that word for many, many years until God gave me light on it.

You know, you can't understand scripture until you get light on it. Go and ask some Bible college professor what it means. He won't be able to tell you because he doesn't have revelation.

I didn't have for many years. I said, Lord, what does this mean? And this is what the Lord showed me. If you have read the 2000 pages of this book, the Bible, and you've come to the after all its warnings and exhortations against sin and warnings and exhortations to be holy, and at the end of reading all that you come to the last page, and you still want to be filthy, go ahead and be filthy.

You read all the Bible and you come to the last page and you still want to commit sin, go ahead and commit sin. In other words, God is saying, go to hell. It's true.

Go to hell. What shall I say? Shall I stop you from ruining your life with Christian rock and with seeking to be friendly with your peers? I said, go ahead. Go ahead.

Go and watch internet pornography as much as you like. Go right ahead. Watch more of it next year.

Go to hell. After all that you hear in CFC, all these years warning you, all the conferences you've come to elder brothers, you heard so much about humbling yourself, be broken. You don't want to be broken.

Don't be broken. Go continue to think that you're somebody. Go ahead.

Think that you're somebody for the rest of 2009. Go and mess up your life. Go and ruin your life.

Go and ruin your family life. But he who has years to hear, let him hear. The greatest commandment is to love Jesus with all your heart.

There's nothing greater than this. There is a false teaching in the world today in Christendom, which says that faith is the greatest thing. Brother, you need faith.

You need faith. You need faith. You need faith.

And there are every preacher on television is saying, you got to have faith. If you're sick, it's because you don't have faith. If you're not a millionaire, it's because you don't have faith.

I wish these people would come to our poor villages in Tamil Nadu and teach that they don't do that. They go to place where already people are millionaires, collect money from them, and sometimes they go deceive poor people, collect the tithes from them and become millionaires themselves. I get mad and angry just like Jesus got in the temple when he saw people making money in the name of religion.

The money changers and the deceivers are back in the temple today and there's nobody to drive them out. And nobody has the guts to expose them. That's a tragedy in Christendom today.

What shall we say about these type of situations? This is the condition of Christendom. And the word of God has warned us and warned us and warned us. He who is filthy, let him be filthy still.

To love God means I keep his commandments, not in a legalistic way. The Pharisees kept their commandments and Jesus said to the Pharisees and said to his disciples in Matthew 5. He said, if your righteousness, Matthew 5.20, does not surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will

not enter the kingdom of heaven. What did he mean by that? How can your righteousness surpass the righteousness of the Pharisees? I would say two things.

Please understand this. First of all, their righteousness was external. They cleaned the outside of the cup.

Your righteousness must surpass that in the sense that your righteousness must be internal. You must not show people love on the outside. It must be from within.

Otherwise, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Number one, listen again. This is spoken to the disciples.

Are you a disciple of Jesus? It says here in verse one, he sat down, his disciples came to him and he told his disciples. And if you're one of his disciples, this is what he says. Unless your righteousness is more than the righteousness of the Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

But you say, Lord, I said those magic words 25 years ago. Lord Jesus come into my heart. Whatever magic words you may have said, if your righteousness does not exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

But you say, Lord, that's a religion of works. Salvation is by faith. Yes, but it is a faith which produces works.

A faith which does not produce works is a dead faith, like a dead man who's got all his fingers and toes and eyes and everything, but no breath. That's what James says. He's got all his doctrines right, but no breath.

Faith without works is dead like that. It's a dead faith. It's a type of faith, an intellectual faith, which even the devil has.

No, that's not it. It's a righteousness that the proof of faith is that you love God with all your heart. And when you say love God with all your heart, it's not something you have to grow to.

I said the other day how your capacity may only be a cup. You love God with all that. It becomes a bucket.

You love God with all that. You become mature and you become like a tub. You love God more.

Our love for God increases as our capacity increases, but all the time it's full. The cup is full. The bucket is full.

The tub is full. The river is full. Your righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees in two ways.

One, it must be inward more than outward. Not that I don't murder, but that I don't get angry. That's why I say anger is serious.

Not that you don't lust with your... that you don't commit adultery, but you don't lust in your heart against women. Not that you give money for God's work, but that you don't want people to know about it. So it must be hidden inward.

And secondly, it must be motivated by passionate love for Jesus Christ. That's why I believe that a passionate love for Christ is the most important thing. But we don't talk about it to others.

We tell the Lord it's right to tell Jesus, Lord I love you passionately. But when other people ask me my testimony, my testimony is I'm a disciple whom Jesus loved. That's it.

But what do I tell the Lord? Lord, thank you for your love. And I sing to him the songs the mystics sang of our devotion to Christ. That's what it means to be a worshiper.

Let the Lord hear it. Not with these sentimental love ballads written by half-converted people, but deep from your heart. Lord, I love you.

What do you want me to do? Well, you know what the Lord asked that 25-year-old nurse to do 65 years ago when she was living in the comfort of the United States? Not to sing love ballads to him. Go to the jungles of India and tell them that I love them. That was a pretty costly love.

It would have been easy to sit in the church every Sunday morning and sing, Oh Lord, I love you so much. And you see her today, she's such a saint. These are the people I respect, I tell you.

I respect them a million times more than these television preachers. Because I see Christ in them. In all these other preachers, I only see the love of money.

It's dollars, dollars, dollars in their eyes. But in these other people, I see the love of Christ in them. You must follow right examples.

Don't be impressed by people who just preach nicely, dress smartly, with all the money they've collected from people to get all these branded dresses. I'm amazed that CFC people are fooled by these television preachers, men or women. I'm amazed how they circulate such CDs of such people and travel miles to listen to these people.

I wouldn't travel one kilometer to listen to these people. I would like to sit at the feet of these godly men and women who sacrificed. That's why I've urged young people, read the biographies of people like Jim Elliot.

Read the biographies of Hudson Taylor, C.T. Studd, Mary Slessor. There were women too, Amy Carmichael. Read about these women.

They didn't sing love ballads, repeating three lines 20 times and think they love Jesus. Their love produced obedience. If you love me, keep my commandments.

I fear that we have a generation growing up who think they are spiritual with zero sacrifice in their life. And they're in a church which doesn't even take an offering. They don't even give money, leave alone any other sacrifice.

And they think they are spiritual because their head is oozing with knowledge about the new covenant and about spirituality and legalism and everything in the Bible, but it hasn't produced fruit in their life. And there's conflict and strife among the elders and conflict and strife between husband and wife and brothers and sisters, but they belong to CFC. You think God is fooled? You think when we stand before Jesus, he's going to ask us which church you belong to? Is love for Jesus important? It is the most important commandment even today.

Let me tell you what Paul said about those who don't love Jesus. 1 Corinthians, I don't know whether you read this verse. 1 Corinthians 16.

It's a pretty scary verse. 1 Corinthians 16 and verse 22. Paul is writing to the Corinthians who were carnal babies born again that like they thought had all the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

And he tells them if 1 Corinthians 16, 22, if anyone, anyone, anyone, anyone does not love the Lord Jesus passionately, let him be accursed. Boy, what would you think if brother Zach got up in the meeting and said a curse on all those who don't love Jesus. Zach's getting very hard.

He's not getting hard. He's just quoting scripture. You don't know it because you don't read the Bible.

Anyone sitting here does not love the Lord Jesus. He or she is accursed. Do you believe the Bible is the inspired word of God? Or do you have favorite verses? You'll never be cured with favorite verses.

All scripture is inspired by God. I'm thankful that I've spent 50 years studying this book. And even today, I'll tell you, I feel I know so little of it.

That I'm surprised how people have time for so many other things when they haven't read the Bible. So much time to watch television, so much time to watch movies, so much time to read romantic stories and so much time to read so many things that they don't know the Bible. And which Christian books do they read? Christian books that don't drive them to the Bible.

Christian love stories and Christian this and Christian that which don't drive them to the scriptures. I read only those type of Christian articles and books that drive me to the scriptures. Because I know that Christian books are like listening to a message.

For example, if what I'm speaking now is written down, that becomes a book. And if it's good to listen to a message, it's good to read a book, provided it drives you to the scriptures. Not if it gives you sentimental feelings of holiness and love.

Let me show you another verse. Ephesians chapter 6. Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 24. We all like to have grace.

But whom does Paul pray? Paul is praying. May grace be with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ with a passionate love. Does Paul believe that loving Jesus with a passionate love is the most important thing? Yes, he does.

He says only such people deserve God's grace. I believe it too. I endorse it 100%.

But don't sing about it. Don't talk about it. Tell Jesus about it.

And let other people see it in your life. And when you testify, don't testify what you're doing for the Lord. Testify what the Lord has done for you.

You shall be witnesses unto me, Jesus said. Not witnesses unto yourself. Be witnesses unto the Lord.

That's not for mature Christians. That's for baby Christians. The apostles were 30 years old, 33 years old, baby Christians, filled with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, be a witness for me. Go everywhere and talk to people. Tell people about me.

Not about yourself. Grace be with those who love the Lord Jesus Christ with a passionate, incorruptible means. The original means undying.

A love that never dies. A love that increases just like my age has increased. Once upon a time I was one year old.

Now I'm 69. My age has increased every year. That is how our love for Jesus must increase.

Undying, growing, passionate devotion to Christ. May the grace of God be upon such people. What shall I say? Shall I say, oh the grace of God be on all of you? No sir, I will not say that.

Grace be upon all who are sitting here who love Jesus with a passionate, undying love. The rest, you can do what you like. Go to a Christian rock.

Or sing these three lines 45 times. Fool yourself. I'm telling you the truth.

I'm telling you what scripture says. James chapter 1. James chapter 1. Let's look at another apostle. He was the one who lived with Jesus for 29 years at home.

But he doesn't call himself a brother of Jesus. He calls himself a slave of Jesus Christ. James 1 verse 12.

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial. That means who overcomes sin. Because once he has overcome and he's been approved.

He will receive the crown of life. Which the Lord has promised to whom? To everybody? No. To those who love him with a devotion.

Who love him with all their hearts. Do you know that the crown of life is not for everybody? Why didn't he say the crown of life which the Lord has promised to all believers? No. It's for those who love him.

And you know I have a question when I read this verse. Do you find the same question? To whom is the Lord going to give the crown of life? Answer me by reading just that one verse. Is it going to be for those who love him? Or is it going to be for those who persevere under trial and overcome and are approved? Tell me.

Let me read it. Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial. Once he has been approved.

He will receive the crown of life. Who's getting it? Did I confuse you? I hope I stirred you to read the scriptures more carefully. Let me say it again.

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, temptation. And once he has been approved. That means God approves.

Yes, he overcame it. He will receive the crown of life. Who's the one who gets the crown of life? The one who overcomes in temptation.

Now let me read it again. The crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him. Who's going to get the crown of life? So, by simple deduction, if A equals B and B equals C. What did algebra teach you? Therefore, A equals C. Now let me teach you.

This teaches us that those who love him will persevere under trial. We're talking about the same people in two different ways. You say this is a man, this is a male.

Same thing. This is a man who loves Jesus passionately. He overcomes in trial.

Same thing. Don't fool yourself that you love the Lord if you don't persevere under trial. That's what I'm trying to say.

If you don't persevere under trial. You don't humble yourself when God calls you to humble yourself. You don't overcome temptation as it comes to you.

You do not love the Lord. That's it. That's the last word on it.

Let me show you another verse. It's amazing. You read scripture carefully and you get light.

All you've got to do is read slowly. One of the things I've been encouraging people in different parts of India now is read scripture slowly. Don't try to go through the Bible.

Let the Bible go through you. I'm not so interested in going through the Bible in one year. Because I'll tell you honestly, when I read the Bible sometimes, I get stuck in one verse for one week.

One verse. How can I finish the Bible in one year? Because I get a verse and I say, boy, Lord, I need to really digest that. Otherwise, you'll be like these children who swallow food.

You put meat in their mouth, gulp. No chewing, nothing. You put something in their mouth, gulp.

And it all comes out like that only. We teach our children, chew your food, chew your food. You live long if you chew your food.

Now the same thing I say with scripture. Chew it, chew it. It's not like milk which you can swallow.

There are certain things you can swallow. You can swallow meat in scripture. Chew it, chew it, chew it.

And then you'll become strong. Chapter 2, James chapter 2, verse 5. Listen, my beloved brothers. Did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to those who love him? Now you know the answer.

To whom is God promising the kingdom? To? To those who love him and? Which is the same as? Those who are rich in faith. You know it's the same thing. If you love him, you'll have strong confidence in God.

You know, the proof of my faith in God is, I mean that I say Lord, the proof of my love for God is that I say I keep his commandment. The proof of my faith in God is, Lord, I believe that every commandment you've given me is for my good. Okay, let me show you another verse.

Well known verse. Romans 8, 28. We know that God causes everything to work together for good.

For whom? For those who love him. Do you see how important it is to love God with all our heart? Everything that happens in your life will work for your good. I want to live there.

The safest place in all the world. Where is it now? It's not the United States. It's not Europe.

It's not these plains. It's not the Arab countries. It's not India.

And certainly not the five star hotels. That's not the safest place today. The safest place is in the shadow of the most high.

In the secret place of the most high. The shadow of the almighty. It is in the center of the will of God.

And if you're in the center of the will of God, you can live in Afghanistan or Iraq and you're quite safe. But if you're not in the center of the will of God, you're not safe. You can be killed crossing the road in a country you think you're safe.

Seek with a terrific passion in your life. Lord, I want to be in the center of your will. Teach your children to seek the will of God for their life.

Whatever it is. Lord, I want to live in the center of your will for my life. All my days.

Love is the greatest. And how shall we love Jesus more? I found two ways. One is by meditating on how much he loved me.

John says in 1 John chapter 4, We love him because he first loved us. This is how we love him. We love him because he first loved us.

1 John 4 verse 19. That's how I love him. If you don't meditate on how much Jesus loved you, you will not love him.

You will not turn from sin. One of my favorite hymns which I sing by myself is this. Ever when tempted, Lord, make me see beneath the olive's moon-pierced shade, my God alone.

He's talking about Calvary. Outstretched and bruised and bleeding on the earth that he made. And make me feel it was my sin, as though no other sins were there.

That was to him who bears the world, a load that he could scarcely bear. That was to him who bears the world, my sin, a load that he could scarcely bear. That he had to cry, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? I've meditated on that for 50 years.

It's made me love Jesus. It's made me take up the cross and humble myself in different circumstances. And to do anything, the body of Christ can be built.

Lord, I'm willing to go down. I'm willing to be nobody. Let the body of Christ be built.

Let fellowship be built. Go that way. Your life will be very happy.

I'll tell you my life is so happy, I wonder if I've met a happier man than me in the world. If you meet one, let me know. I'd like to meet him.

My life is supremely happy under all types of circumstances. It makes no difference. When things go right, things go wrong, it doesn't make a difference.

Because I've seen Jesus on the cross. I've seen the intensity of his love for me. I'm a disciple whom Jesus loves.

And I love him because he first loved me. That's number one. The second thing that makes me love Jesus fervently is Luke's gospel and chapter 7. I'm saying this, not to tell you how much I love Jesus, but to encourage you to love Jesus by doing the same thing yourself.

Meditate on Jesus' love for you, number one. Number two, Luke chapter 7, verse 40 onward, Jesus told a story about two debtors. A money lender, verse 41, had two debtors.

One owed him 500 denarii and the other 50. Both were unable to repay and he forgave both of them. He asked, which of them will love him more? You know, the creditor here is God.

Every sin I commit is a debt to him. And I've committed millions of sins in my life and I'm tremendously in debt to God. Maybe another fellow has not committed so many sins.

He's not so much in debt. One owed him a million sins, another owed him maybe 100,000 sins. Who will love him more? The one who has been forgiven more, Simon said.

Even the Pharisee knew the answer. Yes, Jesus said to Simon the Pharisee. Do you see this woman? She's talking about that sinful woman, the prostitute, who took all her life savings and bought a perfume and poured it at Jesus' feet because she's been forgiven so much.

We were not prostitutes. We were not forgiven so much. And Simon certainly was not a prostitute.

And Jesus said, that's why you don't love me so much as this woman. You criticize her because she's not dressed properly. You criticize her for bringing an offering from her earnings as a prostitute.

But I see the heart behind it. Simon, I know there's a law in Deuteronomy which says that the earnings of a prostitute must never be given as an offering to God. I know that verse, Simon.

But I see her heart. I go beyond that. You guys are all legalists.

You want to kill the woman caught in adultery. But I see God's heart. She's to be forgiven.

This woman has been forgiven so much. You didn't even give me water for my feet. And she's been anointing my feet with oil.

She loved much. Why do you think Mary Magdalene was the one who waited in the tomb? You know, I read that story of this resurrection morning. Peter and John came and looked and saw the tomb was empty.

It was four o'clock in the morning. They said, we haven't slept properly yet. I go back to sleep.

Well, four o'clock in the morning, if you get up, you naturally want to go back to sleep again. Mary was awake before four o'clock in the morning. She went there at three o'clock.

But she didn't go back to bed. She said, I can't go back to bed. I want to know where my Savior is.

Do you have a passion like that? When you've lost Jesus for a while because you're occupied with the world, you go back and say, I've lost my Lord. Where is He? She couldn't go back to bed. Why? Because she had been forgiven much.

Seven demons had been cast out of her. She wasn't forgiven little like Peter and John and all who had lived a decent life. She was a sinner.

A filthy sinner. And Jesus had forgiven much. She loved much.

And so God gave her the privilege to be the first human being to see the resurrected Jesus. Those who know they are great sinners. And who don't despise others.

Who esteem others as better than them. Will see Jesus. They may not become elders and have great honor and position, but they will see Jesus.

And they'll be great in the kingdom of God. The kingdom which God has promised to those who love Him. And such people will find it very easy to love others because they've been forgiven so much.

Such people will find it easy to forgive others because they've been forgiven so much. This is the whole secret of the Christian life. Don't let your past sins bring condemnation upon you because the blood of Jesus has cleansed them.

But always remember the sins you committed. Do you know that I have zero condemnation about my past life. I stand before God today as one who has never sinned because the blood of Christ has justified me.

But having said that, I'll tell you honestly my testimony. I frequently remember the sins I committed as far back as my childhood. I can remember.

I remember it frequently. Because that's how I love my Lord. I said, Lord you forgave me so much.

You forgave me so much. How can I live a shallow half-hearted life for you? I have no time for that. Life is so short.

About 15 years ago, I was driving my moped down the level crossing here. The guy lowered the level crossing and hit me straight on the chest and I fell unconscious on the railway line. Almost died.

15 years ago, I got up and the Lord saved my life. And this is what I said to the Lord at that time. I said, Lord, I have not finished saying thank you to you for dying for me on the cross.

Please give me a few more years. Just to say thank you to you. That's all.

I don't want any reward. I don't want anything. And that's what I sought to do last 15 years.

Dear brothers, you owe so much to Jesus. You may say, well, I'm not such a great sinner. That's because you haven't seen how serious even pride is.

Hypocrisy. You know that pride and hypocrisy are worse than adultery and murder? If you don't see the seriousness of the thing, you think like the worldly person. I haven't killed anybody.

I haven't committed adultery. So what? You've had pride. You've had hypocrisy.

You've had selfishness. That's the worst sins in God's eyes. The fellows who commit murder and adultery are much better.

So, we recognize we are sinners when we see the gravity of sin in God's eyes. Let's go forth determined to love Jesus passionately with all of our heart. And that Jesus will see that in our life.

Let's spend time in worshiping him, saying to him, Lord, whom am I in heaven but you. There's no one on earth that I desire beside you. Don't sing it to people.

Sing it to the Lord. Like a bride whispers her love to her bridegroom in his ear. She doesn't talk about it to others.

Live before Jesus like that. And I believe we will have different types of churches in India. If we have more people like that.

And you will be changed and your life will transform your children. I want to go that way. Let's walk together.

You and I. And build the church of Jesus Christ in this land. Amen. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father. We are a needy people. And the more we hear your word and the more we see your glory.

We see our need. We don't see anybody else's need. I see my own need, Lord, more than anybody else's.

I am far, far from what you want me to be. I believe most of us feel like that right now. But we have hope.

As we trust you. That you will work in our hearts. Producing in us the desire to will and to do with your good pleasure.

The ability and the desire to love you with all of our hearts. And from that love. To serve you.

To sacrifice. To deny ourselves. To be merciful to others.

To forgive others. To serve others. To do good to others.

To walk in lowliness. Never to esteem ourselves as superior to anyone. To serve them.

To love them. To deny ourselves. To walk in purity.

To see that it is the Lord of our sin that crushed you on the cross. Help us each one, Lord, we pray.

---

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/Dpmw5eRm1cl.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/loving-jesus-is-most-important/>

# *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](http://www.sermonindex.net)**