

Married to Christ

by Zac Poonen

The Christian life is a partnership with Jesus, where we are led to spiritual transformation through the Scriptures, not just following the letter of the law.

Duration: 52:02

Scripture: Proverbs 14:14, Matthew 8:16-17, Matthew 9:20-22, Matthew 9:27-30, Matthew 14:22-33, Matthew 17:14-18, Hebrews 1:1

Topics: "Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of having a genuine and passionate relationship with God. He contrasts the mindset of religious people who focus on doing the minimum required with the attitude of a true disciple who seeks to go beyond the letter of the law and experience the glory of Jesus. The preacher warns against accumulating Bible knowledge without allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth and transform one's life. He encourages believers to face challenges and difficulties with the Lord, knowing that with His help, they can overcome any storm.

Transcript

We were looking in our last study about the difference between being religious and spiritual. When we consider the Pharisees, I think when the Pharisees started out as a sect, probably some generations earlier, they must have started with some God-fearing people who really wanted to pursue after a righteous life. But somewhere along the way, they missed the road, and instead of pursuing after God, they began to pursue after the letter of Scripture.

That's why Jesus once said to them, in John chapter 5, he said in verse 39, you search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life, but you are unwilling to come to me, that you might have life. You see the contrast there? They were seeking for eternal life in the letter of Scripture, but they were not coming to Jesus. We can be taken up with the letter of Scripture and miss the road completely, because the letter kills.

In the Old Testament, it was just the law that God gave, the word. The word was the word of the Lord. The prophet said, hear the word of the Lord.

But when Jesus came, he didn't just say, hear the word of the Lord. The word had become flesh. In the Old Testament we read, thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

The light was the word. But in the New Testament we read, in Jesus was life, and that life was the light of men, not just the written word. And that's where a lot of people have gone astray even today.

We think we are all right because we accept the word of God, the Bible as God's word. But you can spend all your life searching the Scriptures and miss eternal life. That's what he was saying to them.

You search the Scriptures because you think there is eternal life in them, but you don't come to me. Yet all the Scriptures, he said, are pointing to me, the Lord Jesus said. And you don't allow the Scriptures to point you to Jesus.

You get taken up with the Scripture itself. Think of the multitudes of people today who are studying Scriptures just to get a sermon. And they study concordances to produce sermons.

And they spend hours perfecting their sermons, making sure that it's a proper introduction and substance and conclusion and that there are three points and if you are preaching English then all the points must begin with the same alphabet. All these things, you know, which I am not against them. I say if it leads you to Jesus and leads other people to Jesus, do it as you like.

But the great danger is the person who is preaching is taken up with the Scripture itself and that's all, and the person who is getting it is also getting just a letter. He is not being led to Jesus. The Scriptures, he said, bear witness of me.

And the person who preaches the word correctly is the one who leads you beyond Scripture to Jesus. I think you see that in the Mount of Transfiguration where we read Moses and Elijah stood there with Jesus and we can say Moses represented the law and Elijah represented the prophets. And very often the Old Testament is referred to as the law and the prophets.

So Moses and Elijah combined on the Mount of Transfiguration represented the entire Old Testament and Jesus represented the New Covenant. And Peter was so taken up with this, he said, let us make three tabernacles for Moses, for the law, the prophets, Elijah and for Jesus. And as soon as he did that, there was a cloud.

And then a voice from heaven which said, this is my beloved son. In other words, don't put him on the same level as the law and the prophets. This is a new age.

This is a new covenant. Listen to him. And that's why we read in Hebrews in chapter 1 that in the Old Testament long ago, God spoke through the prophets in many ways, but now he has spoken to us in his son.

So you can say that you've got something out of scripture when you have gone beyond the letter and you've seen the glory of Jesus. If the Holy Spirit has not been able to show you the glory of Jesus in scripture and you merely accumulate a lot of Bible knowledge, the more you accumulate, the deader you'll be. It's true.

See, just like the food we eat. When you eat food, if it just keeps on getting accumulated in your stomach and never gets digested, what's going to happen? I think finally, if you don't vomit it all out, you'll die. But a lot of people, that's all they do.

They fill their minds with a study of scripture and they get up in the pulpit and vomit it all out for people. And people have to eat that vomit, what we call this beautiful sermon. It's not leading people to Jesus.

It is when that food I eat gets digested and becomes part of me, then the food has accomplished its purpose. And when the word of God has come into my heart and transformed me inwardly, convicted me, made me repent and come to the feet of the Lord and made me a little more like Jesus, then the scripture has been fulfilled. And then I'm no longer religious.

I become spiritual. But it's easy for us in the pursuit of righteousness to be taken up with the letter of the law. And even in the pursuit of victory over sin, you realize that a lot of Christians are living substandard Christian lives.

And I want to live a victorious life. You see, for example, in Romans, after it speaks in the latter part of chapter 3 and chapter 4 and chapter 5, about justification by faith, how our sins are forgiven, we have peace with God, we are declared righteous freely. The next step after that, that means we are born again.

What's the next step after that? In Romans 6, victory over sin. Shall we continue in sin, it says. And here is a person who is trying to understand Romans 6, how the old man was crucified with Christ.

I'm talking about a sincere person, who really wants to follow the Lord. And in his pursuit of victory, he somehow finds himself in bondage to the law. And that is what is dealt with in Romans 7, which comes after Romans 6. And then it says in Romans 7, my brethren, verse 4, you were made to die to the law through the body of Christ, so that you might be married to another, even him who was risen from the dead.

The Christian life is pictured like a marriage. And that's a very beautiful picture of true Christianity. The Bible speaks about Jesus being our husband, and we are the wife.

That's why we take his name. You know, when a woman gets married, she takes the name of her husband. And the word Christian is taking the name of our husband, Jesus Christ.

And the only person who is really qualified to take it, is one who is married to him. But when we use this illustration of marriage, we can picture it like this. Let me put it as three marriages that we can go through.

First, we are married to this old man, which is spoken of in Romans 6. He's a wicked man. He's like a husband who beats up his wife, hammers her and treats her badly. And that's a picture of our unconverted life, where our life is miserable.

Some people enjoy it. But I think those of us who are converted, we never enjoyed those days, living with this husband who was so evil. And we long to be free.

And then we hear this wonderful news, that God has killed the old man. This husband that tortured you, is dead. Aren't you happy? That's what we read in Romans 6. Your old man, to whom you were married for so many years, which made you sin, which ruined your life, God has killed the old man on the cross.

And when that husband is dead, the marriage is dissolved. Finished. You are no longer in bondage to that old man.

You are free. And then, now you want to be married to another type of man. And you see this man who is very upright, and very righteous.

And you decide to be married to him. Now he never hammers you. His name is the law.

This is your second marriage. And the law never hammers you, never makes an unrighteous demand on you, never asks you to do anything wrong, only asks you to do what is right. And in that way, it is much better than the first marriage, where the other man was always asking you to do things, wrong things.

But, this law is so demanding. He demands that everything in the house must be tip-top, the shoes must be kept in the proper place, the clothes must be ironed perfectly, the breakfast must be ready at 8 o'clock in the morning, not 8-0-1, 8-0-0. At 8 a.m. it must be there.

And he is not asking for anything unlawful, everything righteous, right, right, right, right. You cannot find fault with anything that he asks. The only thing is, he doesn't help you one bit.

You have to do everything on your own. And you ask yourself, what did I get myself into? I got into a bigger soup here, married to this man. And a lot of Christians are struggling in this, trying to keep the law, trying to please this demanding husband, and never being able to satisfy him.

And they are always coming short. And they wish that this husband would die also. But he never dies.

He has no high blood pressure, no diabetes, and no heart problem. The law of God is perfectly healthy. And it looks as if he lived forever.

And your whole life you say, am I going to be married to this man forever? It's a miserable future you look forward to. But God sees you. And you see this other man, that's Jesus.

He is so compassionate. So you mistook the law for Christ. You thought you were marrying Christ, but you married the law.

You made a mistake. And you wish you could be married to that person, but you can't be married to that person, because this man is your husband. And he'll never die.

But God sees your longing. That's what Romans 7 deals with. And says, I will dissolve this marriage.

How does he do it? God hates divorce. There will be no divorce. And the wonderful thing we read in Romans 7, the verse we read is, since the law does not die, the Lord says, I'll make you die.

And if the wife dies, then the marriage is broken. Right? And so God puts us to death. And says the marriage is broken.

And now, I have been legally separated from my husband, because I have died. Because it says here, verse 2, the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living. But if her husband dies, she is released.

But if while her husband is living, verse 3, she is joined to another man, she'll be an adulteress. But the husband is never going to die. So, the wife dies.

And so the Lord allows us to die, and then raises us up from the dead. And says, now you can marry Christ. That's the meaning of Romans 7.4. You have died to that, so that now you can be married to Jesus.

And when you get married to Jesus, you find, He also wants breakfast at 8 o'clock. He also wants the shoes to be put in the proper place, and the clothes to be ironed, and His standards are even higher than the law. The law said, you shall not commit adultery, I say to you, you shall not lust with your eyes.

The law said, you shall not murder, I say to you, you shall not be angry. Is the standard higher or lower? Higher. But, with one big difference, that He comes to help you.

He says, let's do it together. And that's what makes the difference. And that is the true Christian life.

It's when you understand that, that you become spiritual. The man who lives under the law is only going to be religious. And he's never going to make it.

Now, how does Jesus work with us? I'm using an example when I say, breakfast must be ready at eight o'clock. I'm talking about the righteous demands that Jesus has upon our life. Now, let's say, I'm a terribly lazy wife, who can, I get up from bed only at about eleven o'clock in the morning, and I'm so slow in the kitchen that my breakfast is ready only by three o'clock in the afternoon, or something like that.

And Jesus says, never mind, let's work together. And after one week of working together, I start getting up at ten o'clock in the morning, and my breakfast is ready by two o'clock. It's better.

It's better than three o'clock last week. And He doesn't condemn me. He says, never mind, we'll make it.

One of these days, it'll become eight o'clock. Don't worry. Let's work at it together.

Isn't it good to be married to a husband? And one day comes, when I'm up in the morning, and breakfast is ready at eight o'clock. This is Christianity. It's exciting to be married to such a husband.

Who wants to be married to the law? Who wants to be married to the old man? Once we see the beauty and the glory of Jesus, we say, Lord, if this is Christianity, I want it all my life. You never ask me to do anything which you don't ask me to do along with you. Do you know that? Do you know the multitude of Christians? I've only used the picture of three marriages.

Unbelievers are locked in the first marriage. Most believers are locked in the second one. They're trying, they're trying all their life to please God and never succeed.

Something like the disciples who toiled all night and got nothing. And the Lord says, why don't you trust me? I can fill your boat in no time. See, the Christian life is a partnership with Jesus.

He never expects you to do a single thing on your own. He says in John 15, verse 5, without me, what's the rest of the verse? You can do? Zero. Without Jesus, whatever you do will be zero.

But what's the other side of the coin? Philippians 4.13. Paul says, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. In other words, there is not a single command in the Bible which I cannot keep through Christ who strengthens me. Without Christ, I can't even keep one of them.

I may keep one or two of them, but I won't keep them properly. I won't keep them in the right spirit. I may keep them, but keep them in the wrong motive or the wrong attitude.

I can't do anything. But when the Lord works with me, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. And that's what makes me spiritual.

As long as I'm trying to do the whole thing on my own, even if I attain to a certain standard, I'm just a religious Christian. You know, there are many non-Christians who don't smoke, who don't drink, who are very upright, who don't tell lies in their office. They are very upright.

They won't take bribes. They are very righteous. They are not Christians.

A Christian can be like that too. He doesn't need Christ. And there's a certain righteousness that comes.

In God's eyes, it's filthy rags. In God's eyes, it's fig leaves, which He curses. But in the eyes of men, you get an honor for being a godly type of person.

Because vast majority of Christians don't have discernment. And when you're living in the midst of people who don't have discernment, they can think you're a godly person. But any spiritual man with discernment can see through you that you're not spiritual.

You're just a religious person. And I tell you, Christendom is full of such religious people, frustrated inwardly, depressed. There is a righteousness in their life.

But it is not a righteousness coupled with joy and peace. You know what it says in Romans 14 and verse 17? The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking. It is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

A righteousness without joy, without peace, is a righteousness of the law. They did not have inward peace and joy under the law. But they had righteousness.

And that is how Phariseeism developed. And that is how Phariseeism develops today. Multitudes of people who are righteous externally.

And one mark of such people we read in Mark chapter 3. You know, it says about Jesus these words. When Jesus entered a synagogue, there was a man with a withered hand, Mark 3 verse 1. Verse 2 it says, The Pharisees were watching him closely. Whenever you find, please listen to this carefully.

Whenever you find you are watching other believers very closely to find some fault. Please remember this verse. You are a Pharisee of the Pharisees.

A godly man is not watching other people closely to see whether they make a mistake or to see whether they trip up. He is watching his own life. Not other people's lives.

He is seeing where he is unchristlike. Not where other people are unchristlike. The devil is called the accuser of the brethren.

And one way he makes us accusers of the brethren is by giving us sharp eyes to look at the faults of other people. Christian churches in this land are full of such people. They speak in tongues, they shout and praise the Lord and they watch other people very closely to find fault with them.

They are not spiritual. They are ungodly. They are Pharisees.

They are legalists. They are religious. Don't mistake that for spirituality.

There is no joy in their righteousness. There is no peace with other people in their righteousness. It is just righteousness.

And they will particularly strain at mosquitoes and swallow camels at the same time. Just like Jesus said. Small, small things they will pick out and swallow mosquitoes at the same time.

I am not saying that we should swallow mosquitoes, swallow camels, sorry. I am not saying that we should avoid camels and swallow mosquitoes. No, we should avoid both.

But, very often the people who are looking for small, small things do not realize bigger things wrong in their own life. I have seen for example certain denominations where they are very particular that a sister should not wear ornaments. And if they see some sister wearing maybe 400 rupee earrings, they are going to hit out at that from the pulpit.

But these people who hit out at these 400 rupee earrings have got 10,000 rupees worth of fittings in their bathrooms of their houses which they never feel convicted about. This is what I mean. They strain at mosquitoes and swallow camels.

They wear 5000 rupee sarees and judge a poor girl for wearing a 300 rupee earring. What is this? It is all hypocrisy. And the multitudes of religious people like this in our country, I am sick and tired of them.

Now, I am not preaching you should wear earrings. Don't misunderstand me. I am just saying that it is very easy to judge a person for a small little thing and there can be something a million times worse in your life.

And that's what Jesus was constantly hitting out against. He says, you people swallow, you squeeze rent from poor widows who have rented your houses and when they can't pay that rent, you turn them out of the house and then on Saturday you come to the synagogue and pray a long prayer. He says, you are just humbugs.

You are hypocrites. True spirituality makes you compassionate. If a widow cannot pay the rent for the house, your house which she is living in, you say, forget it, sister.

Never mind. Stay free. God has given me freely.

I am told to give freely. That's the mark of a godly man. He looks at Jesus.

He doesn't look at the letter of the law. He doesn't quote scripture to other people saying, oh, no man anything, sister. It says, oh, no man anything.

Pay up your rent. No. He looks at the word made flesh.

Jesus. And he asks himself, can you imagine Jesus squeezing money out of a poor widow? Never. He says, I am not going to do it.

He is not looking at the letter of the law. He is looking at Jesus. He is not thinking of what he can get out of other people.

He is thinking of what he can give to God. And when he gives freely to a widow in need, he is giving to God. He is not calculating.

You know, people who are religious are very calculating in what they give. Everything. I told you, like in the elder son is very conscious of all that he has done.

See, whenever I think of people who talk about the sacrifices they have made and they give a testimony, they try to give a little impression of some of the sacrifices they have made for the Lord. Or try to show how they were nobodies, but God has made them somebody now. If you are a spiritual man, it is the other way around.

You were a somebody and God made you a nobody. That is a spiritual man. But very often what we see in Christian circles is a boasting that I was a nobody, but God has now made me a somebody.

They haven't understood. It is the spirit of Lucifer. I was down there, but now I am up here.

Now, the attitude of a spiritual man towards sacrifice is very different. He can honestly look back over his past life and say, I can't think of one sacrifice I have made for the Lord. And he is not acting humble.

That is really what he feels. It is not that he has not made sacrifices, but they don't appear like sacrifices to him. Do some of you feel that you have made some sacrifice for the Lord? Let me use an illustration.

When do you see the stars in the sky? At night. Are there stars in the sky right now? Yes or no? Yes. But can you see even one of them? No.

Think of those stars as the sacrifices you have made in your life. When do you see them? When you are in the darkness. When the sun of righteousness rises.

When you see the sacrifice Jesus made on Calvary for you, that is the sun of righteousness. All your sacrifices disappear. You can't even see one of them in the sky.

And when you look up at the sky today and say, I can't see a single star, you are honest. And when a godly man looks back over his life and he says, I have never made one sacrifice for the Lord, he is absolutely honest because he is not in the darkness. He is living in the light.

And that's really the attitude of a godly man. He always feels other people have sacrificed perhaps, but I haven't. And everything I have given up, the Lord has given me a hundred times back.

How can I call that a sacrifice? How can you call it a sacrifice when you gave one thing and you got a hundred times back? No. Any idea of sacrifice and I have given up this for the Lord is an indication first of all that you are in darkness and secondly that you are a religious person and you mention it in your testimonies. I think it is very very difficult for a godly man to write an autobiography of his own life because which autobiography will honestly say the dirty thoughts he struggled with, the filthy things he did in his life.

I have never read an autobiography like that. I have never read a biography like that. That is all hidden.

They talk about the sacrifices and what they started as nothing and they became somebody. To me it is all Lucifer, all the way through. Jesus never wrote a book about his life.

Do you think he made no sacrifices? People talk about the thirty years of Jesus' life. They call it the hidden years. Why were they hidden? Because he never told anybody about what he did in those years.

He never told anybody about what all secret sufferings and sacrifices and self-denials and many many things that he went through. He never told anyone. Why should anybody know? If you say it, it is only to get honor that you are such a sacrificial person that you have suffered so much for the Lord's sake.

It is filthy honor-seeking. And the sad thing is people who study the scriptures never seem to get light on it. If you come to Jesus, you will get light immediately.

That is what I mean. There is a lot of difference between coming to the scriptures and coming to Jesus. A religious man comes to the scriptures and he lives without light upon his life throughout.

A spiritual man comes into the Lord's presence and immediately he is smitten. And he says, Oh Lord, what a self-seeking man I am, promoting myself, showing myself off and advertising my sacrifices and advertising my performances and what all you did through me and all these types of stuff to gain honor. The whole thing was dead works.

And I have never revealed to other people the filthiness there was in my life and the corruption and the wickedness. I leave all that out in my testimony. Then it is better we keep quiet altogether.

Jesus said, Do everything in secret. Whether you pray, or you do righteousness, or you give, or you fast, do it all in secret. And your father, who sees in secret, will reward you openly.

Let your father do it. And your father is very faithful to reward you openly exactly according to the measure of what you have sacrificed and denied yourself and suffered in secret. Leave it to him.

And leave it to him to do it at his own time. These are simple truths. And if you only read the Bible, you would understand it straight away.

But our minds have been conditioned by the level of Christianity that we have seen in Christian leadership around us and the books we have read. And we think certain things are, Yeah, that's all right. Everybody does it.

I don't care if everybody does it. If that's not in the Scripture, that's not the right way. If that's not the way Jesus would do it, then I don't want to do it.

I don't care if every Christian leader in the world does it that way. Everybody can be wrong. Let God be true.

And every man a liar. So, you find that religious people are very taken up with their sacrifices, with their activities, and they are not happy until at least some other people know what they are doing for the Lord and what sacrifices they made for the Lord. A spiritual man is quite content if nobody knows.

In fact, he hides a lot of things. He doesn't want people to know. He is happy if somebody else gets the credit for what he has done.

Are you like that? If not, we can begin to be like that from now on and say, Lord, I don't want to follow the other way. I am not saying we shouldn't give a testimony, but I think we should give a testimony with fear and trembling and judge ourselves. I remember the times when I have given a testimony in my message and I have gone back and really searched my heart.

Lord, show me, was there one thing there which maybe I needed to say to encourage some people? But was there any element of seeking some honor for myself, some display of myself? Because the more I display myself, the less people will see Christ. That's a law. If you want to really lift up Christ, you really have to be hidden.

But if you display yourself a little bit, in that measure, Christ will be hidden. That's why it's so serious. One other thing I want to say is, in a marriage relationship, you know, where our relationship with Jesus is like that of a wife to a husband, there is no question of percentage.

You know, in the Old Testament law, there were percentages. You had to pay 10% of your money to God. It was something like paying income tax.

Now, nobody rejoices in paying more income tax. Nobody goes and pays to the income tax department more than they ask for. Most people pay less and cheat and tell lies.

I've never heard of anybody saying, well, I love you folks in the income tax department so much, I'd like to give you 5% more than you have asked for. And that's how people gave under the law. Alright, okay, this God wants 10%, okay, here God have it.

They gave it, but they were not happy. It was righteousness, but there was no joy. There was no peace.

And when you come into the New Testament, God says, God loves a cheerful giver. Not how much you give, but how you give is more important than the New Covenant. How you give.

Do you give cheerfully? How is it in a marriage relationship? You know, in a happy marriage relationship, where a husband and wife trust one another, they will have a joint bank account. Where the husband will say, you are also a signatory, you can draw anything you like, even though a lot of the wealth may have come from the husband, it doesn't matter. He says, all that I have is yours.

We'll have a joint account. But where the marriage is not very secure, the wife may say, well, I think we better keep separate accounts. You keep yours, and I mean, I'll draw once in a while from yours, but I like to keep mine for myself.

And I've heard that nowadays, in some western countries, where divorce has become so common, the woman who gets married does not even change her name, because she does not know how long she'll be married to this man for. So, it's not worth changing the name for two or three years, because after two or three years, she may be marrying somebody else. So, she keeps her own name, and she does not change her account or anything.

Her account is kept by herself, because you never know how long you'll be with this man. A lot of people's Christian relationship with Jesus Christ is something like that. Lord, what's mine, I'd like to keep for myself.

If you want a little bit, I'll give you. I don't think you'll ever have a happy relationship with the Lord like that. In a true marriage, you say, all that I have is yours.

Not ten percent, Lord. Everything, my time, my energy, my life, my money, my ambitions, my future, everything is in a joint account with you. And when you give yourself to the Lord like that, something wonderful happens.

We read in John chapter 17, that is how Jesus lived with the Father. See, Jesus' relationship with His Father was similar to the relationship we are to have with Christ. And Jesus did not have a legal relationship with the Father, where He told the Father, I'll give you ten percent, or one day in seven, the Sabbath day, the remaining days are for me.

Nothing of that sort. He says in John 17 and verse 10, all things that are mine are thine. That is a New Testament type of relationship.

That is a true marriage relationship. All things that are mine are thine. That is only one part of the story.

Here is the best part of that story, that news. And all things that are thine are mine. What a wonderful relationship that is.

And I picture it like this. Jesus came to marry me. He is a multi-millionaire with millions and millions of rupees in his account.

And I am a little beggar woman with ten paise in my tin can, sitting in the roadside. And Jesus says, you give me everything that is yours. What is mine? Ten paise.

And I'll give you everything that is mine. And from now on, let's have a joint account. Isn't that wonderful? It really is.

And that is what I did. And that is what I want to encourage you to do. Don't hang on to your ten paise and keep a separate account for that.

Put it in along with his millions and be a joint signatory and have a joint account with him and say, Lord, all that is mine is yours. I have no plans for the future. Do you know what it means to say to the Lord, all that is mine is yours? Think of a woman who gets married.

Maybe she had great plans in her single days to go here and travel there and get this degree and the other degree and do this work and the other work. And one day, all of a sudden, she gets married. What happens to all her ambitions and plans and desires to travel here and to study this and that? It's all gone.

Now she has to go where her husband goes and if she really loves him, she'll be delighted. She'll say, what's that? I don't care if I don't travel, if I can be with you. And that is really what it means to give ourselves to Christ.

Say, Lord, I have had many plans for the future. But now I'm married to you, I have no plans. You tell me what you want to do day by day, I'm happy to do that.

Everything in life, you and I are going to do together, Lord, from now on. Jesus once said in Matthew 11, take my yoke upon you. And you've seen in the fields here bullocks with a yoke on their neck.

In one sense, it's better to be free of a yoke because the yoke rubs your neck all the time. And these bullocks that have had a yoke, they've got marks on their neck. And the other bullocks who've never had a yoke, they are free, can run around wherever they like, but they never know how to plow a straight furrow.

They are useless. Think of all the wild bulls in the jungles, useless to God, useless to men. But think of these bullocks that have been under the yoke in the fields.

Because of them, you and I get rice and wheat and many things. How useful they are. And so it is with a disciple who has allowed the yoke to be on his neck and be bound.

You know, when you are under a yoke, you are bound to the other bullock. And when Jesus says, take my yoke upon you, it's a picture of marriage, it's a picture of authority, but it's also a picture of fellowship that

you and I are going to do everything together. You don't know how to plow a straight furrow? Come, I'll teach you.

And as a junior bullock teams up with a senior bullock, together they plow a straight furrow. And together I learn how to overcome sin. Together with Jesus, I learn how to overcome my passions.

I learn how to control my tongue. I learn how to love my enemies. I learn how to bless those who curse me.

I learn how to speak the truth in all circumstances. I learn how to be free from the love of money because I have found greater riches in God's kingdom. It's a wonderful life.

It's not a life of, oh, somehow or the other trying to keep the law. No. It is righteousness with joy in the Holy Spirit.

There is a lovely verse in the Old Testament which is paraphrased in the Living Bible like this. Proverbs 14, 14. In the Living Bible it says, The godly man's life is exciting.

It's one of my favorite verses because I have found the reality of it in my life. It doesn't say the godly man's life is easy. It doesn't say the godly man's life is comfortable.

It doesn't say the godly man's life is prosperous. But it does say the godly man's life is exciting. New challenges.

New things to do along with Jesus. New things to overcome. Let anything face me in the future.

If I can face it with my husband, I can handle it. This is the Christian life. This is the only way God wants us to live on this earth.

Not married to the law where I try, try, try, try, try to keep certain commandments and I'm always unhappy because I'm never able to make it. But in fellowship with an understanding, compassionate husband who understands my struggles, who knows that I'm so lazy, I'm so undisciplined, I can't get breakfast ready at the right time, but I'm working on it. And he's helping me.

And things get better. And suddenly I discover one day I can control my tongue. This uncontrolled tongue that was let loose hurting people for so many years.

Suddenly one day I found that with the yoke of Jesus upon my neck, my tongue has come under control. These wandering thoughts that made me slave to so many of my passions for years, I found in working together with the yoke of Jesus and a compassionate, merciful Lord who is not there to jump on me every time I fall, but who is merciful and says, never mind, you fell that time, but get up. We're going to get victory over this lust of the eyes.

We're going to get victory over these dirty thoughts. And little by little by little the thoughts become pure. And over a period of time we discover even our dreams become pure.

Filthy dreams are replaced with dreams of serving the Lord. What a wonderful work it is. It's not a burden.

It's righteousness with joy. I'm not telling you fairy tales. I'm telling you exactly the truth that you can experience if you take the yoke of Jesus upon your neck.

It won't happen overnight. We have developed bad habits through so many years. And they're not going to disappear overnight.

But if you take the yoke of Jesus, you're like, let's say, you're like a wild bull that's never done anything under anybody's authority. You've been wandering in the wilderness and done whatever you like for so many years. And now you've been teamed up with a senior bullock who's trying to teach you to plow a straight furrow.

And the first day it's all crooked. Yeah, it will be. And the senior bullock says, never mind.

We'll do it a little better tomorrow. And tomorrow it's not so crooked, but it's still crooked. But over a period of time you're beginning to learn.

And life is exciting. That's how God wants us to live. And we may face problems in the world like the storms that the disciples faced on the Sea of Galilee.

And together with Jesus, they could handle it. If they had gone into that storm on their own, they'd never have been able to make it. But when they faced it along with the Lord, then there was no problem at all.

And that is the Christian life. That's why God allows us to face all types of difficulties. I've thought of it like this.

How boring the Gospels would have been if it was written there, well, Jesus went for a marriage in Cana and there were no problems. They had plenty of wine and they had plenty of food and they came home. Not nothing exciting about that.

Or Jesus got into the boat and went across the sea and it was a calm, peaceful day and they crossed over to the other side. And there were two beggars who came to Him in their need and Jesus gave them some money and sent them home. What a boring Gospels those would be.

I think even our Sunday school children will say, we're not coming to listen to such stories next Sunday. But see how the Gospels are exciting. There was need, no wine in Cana, storm on the lake, blind people, all types of problems and Jesus could solve it.

This child has been having fits from the time it's born, demon possessed, cast here and there. Jesus says, bring him here. Healed, handed back to the Father.

I see this wonderful truth which I mentioned earlier. There was never a problem that Jesus couldn't handle. I don't see a single case in the Gospels of Jesus scratching His head and saying, what shall I do about that one? Never.

Not even one case. People came to Him with all types of complicated problems and He took care of that. Except as I said, where somebody said, please tell my brother to divide the property with me and Jesus said, sorry, I didn't come here to help you to make more money.

But if it's a problem in your life, a storm in your life, come to the Lord. He doesn't expect you to face that alone. He says, let's do it together.

The Christian life is a partnership. It's a marriage. Without that married relationship with Jesus Christ, all your Christianity is going to be religiosity under the law.

There will be no joy in your righteousness. There will be no joy in your service. Even after one year of serving the Lord in a difficult field, you will say, boy, this is hard.

But if you are doing everything with the Lord, even after many, many years, you will find the truth of that verse, the godly man's life is exciting. New challenges. Everything.

We look forward and say, with Jesus' help, I can handle that. And your attitude towards the Lord will be exactly like the attitude of a wife who deeply loves her husband. Not, what is the minimum I can do for the Lord? You know, religious people are like this.

This is how it is to be under the law. And lots of Christians are like this. What is the minimum I have to do? How many hours do I have to work to get my pay? That's the attitude of a servant.

That's the attitude of people under the law. What's the minimum amount of money I have to give? What's the minimum amount of sacrifice I have to make? Anyone whose life operates on the principle of what is the minimum is under law. Ten percent of my money one day in seven.

Okay, I'll give that. The rest is mine. But Jesus never came with that spirit.

When He served the Father, His whole attitude was, What is the maximum I can give? I have only thirty-three and a half years on earth. I have to give all of it, totally the maximum possible. And that's why His life was so happy.

And I want to say to all of you, when you are young, if you can offer yourself to the Lord like that, and don't look at other people around you, because they may not have that attitude. And that's why their lives are so miserable. That's why they are so depressed.

Have the attitude of Jesus who said, Lord, whatever is the maximum I can give for you, I want to give, because I love you. Like more than any wife loves her husband. I love you with all of my heart.

And I want to give everything. All my future plans and ambitions are on the altar. I want to get rid of them.

I want you. All my money, all my time, all my plans, all my interests, passions. Maybe you are in love with somebody, you want to marry.

You say, Lord, I give it up, because I want you. If that's not your will, I drop it this moment. Nothing.

You can have everything. It's only such a person who is going to enter into the fullness of life that Jesus came to give. Otherwise you'll be religious all your days.

What are we going to do? Are we going to respond to what we've heard? Is it just another message that you've heard this morning? Or are you going to say, Lord, I want to live like this. And it doesn't matter if other people around me are not living like this. I want to live like this all my days.

I don't want to be married to the law anymore, to the letter. I want to be married to you. I want to walk all my days taking your yoke upon me.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, there is so much more to the Christian life than we have experienced. And we want to enter into that.

All of it. We want to experience it in our life. We want to be delivered from empty religiosity and walk in true spirituality.

For the glory of your name, we ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

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