

# Men Who Manifest God's Nature

by Zac Poonen

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**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 22:22, John 8:1, Luke 21:15

**Topics:** "Humility", "Divine Nature"

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## Description

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## Transcript

So we bow our heads in prayer. Our father in heaven, it is your good pleasure to give us your kingdom. It is your good pleasure to bless every single person here, especially the poor and needy who are crying out to you for some need in their life, some guidance, some direction.

Lord Jesus, you said where two or three are gathered, I'm in the midst. We want to be aware more than anything else of your presence here, in whose presence the angels cover their faces. Thank you, Lord.

Let your spirit brood over us at this time. We only desire to glorify your name on earth. Hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Forgive us our sins as we have forgiven everybody else. Let us not fall in temptation.

Deliver us from all evil. For the kingdom is yours, the power and the glory forever and ever. In Jesus' name, amen.

So God has ordained that men should take the lead in every church. And if a man does not take the lead, he's letting down God tremendously. And that's the tragedy in the world today, that many men who should

be leaders are not leaders because they don't know God and they don't know his word.

And if you don't know God and you don't know his word, how can you lead the church? I'm not saying that to condemn anyone, to encourage you, to say to you, God has limited himself to use men. Let me show you one example of that in Acts of the Apostles in chapter 10. Acts of the Apostles, chapter 10.

There are a number of things we learn from this story. In Acts 10, there was a man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion, means a captain of a hundred soldiers in the Roman army, was called Italian cohort. But he was a very devout man, one who feared God.

He didn't know anything about Jesus. I don't know, but he knew there was some God up there in heaven. He feared him and he gave money to the poor and he prayed to this unknown God.

He didn't pray in the name of Jesus, and I don't think he worshipped the Roman idols. He probably saw through all that and he prayed to God where you are continually. Imagine a non-Christian who doesn't know anything about the Bible, doesn't know anything about Christ, praying that the Holy Spirit can record that he prayed to God continually.

That doesn't mean he was 24 hours on his knees, but that means very frequently he prayed. And you know, prayer is an expression of our helplessness. When we pray, we are saying, Lord, I'm helpless.

Maybe I need forgiveness of sins. Maybe I need some solution in this particular problem I'm facing. It's a wonderful thing to be helpless.

When Jesus said men ought to pray always, and 1 Thessalonians 5 says, that's Luke 18 verse 1. And 1 Thessalonians 5 says, pray without ceasing. It doesn't mean we ought to be always praying verbally or on our knees. It means to be in that constant state of helplessness.

Only helpless people pray. Strong, confident men don't pray. And if you think you can handle situations, you don't pray.

It's when you come to the end of yourselves that we pray. And there's a sense in which we should be at the end of ourselves all the time. That is the true Christian life.

Jesus said in John 15, without me, you can do zero. You believe that? John 15, without me, you can do zero. In other words, anything you try to do without seeking God's help, ultimately you'll find that the day in eternity it was zero.

I don't want a bunch of zeros as my labors on earth. I'm not always on my knees. I don't want to boast I pray so many hours a day.

I know I used to hear such testimonies in my younger days, and I used to get discouraged. Somebody prayed two hours a day, four hours a day. I said, Lord, I don't seem to be able to do that.

I was working in the Navy, and I had a lot of work to do. And even after I quit the Navy, but I said, Lord, what does your word say? And I read in Luke 18, verse one, I have to pray 24 hours a day. Aha.

And men should always pray. I read in 1 Thessalonians, in chapter five, pray without ceasing 24, both places, Jesus and the Holy Spirit says, pray 24 hours. So then I realized prayer is not being on my knees.

There is a time for that. Jesus would go out early morning into the desert or remote places and pray. Before other people woke up, he would go away.

In other words, what I see there is primarily that he wanted some place where he would not be disturbed. And living in a city of 11 million people like Bangalore, I say, Lord, I don't find any desert places nearby where there are no people. Everywhere there are people.

So what should I do? And the Lord said, you can have a quiet, undisturbed place in your bed at different times of the night, whenever you wake up. I don't mean you put an alarm and wake up, but you know how sometimes, anyway, I sometimes wake up in the middle of the night. And I want to talk to my father.

And especially early morning when I get up, I begin to say, Dad, I'm so thankful. I'm your son. And that you love me.

That's the most important thing. Not what I do for you. You don't love me because I'm going to do something for you today.

You love me because I'm your son. And I didn't do anything to be your son. You just chose me.

You sent Jesus to earth and made me your son. And I don't deserve it, I know. I just want to say you, Dad, I love you.

In private, I always call him Dad. It's the English equivalent of the Hebrew word Abba. Romans 8, 16 says, the spirit within us cries out Abba.

If it is translated, Daddy. But in public, Jesus always said, Father. So in public, I pray, our Father who art in heaven.

But in private, Abba. In our Indian languages, it is Abba. That's the intimate word that children use to their father at home.

And what we use in English is Dad, Daddy. God wants us to be intimate with him. I want to ask you, brothers, first of all, if you want to fulfill God's purpose for you, with which he sent you to earth, get to know him as Dad.

This guy Cornelius, he was a military man and no knowledge of God, but he prayed continually. So this unknown God, he was praying. And does God hear such prayers? Listen.

An angel came to him and said to him in verse 4, last part of verse 4, Acts 10 verse 4, your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God. Does God hear prayers that are not prayed in the name of Jesus? This guy knew nothing about Jesus. He knew nothing about a heavenly father or a God or anything.

He just prayed, God, I don't know who you are, but when I look at this universe, I know somebody created it. And I look at the wonders of my body, I know somebody created me. It was not accidental.

You just got to look at the universe and your body to believe in a God. That's all. You got to just look at a little baby that comes out of a wee tiny seed in a mother's womb.

And if you can't believe in God, you must be off your head. You must be intellectually stupid to see a baby born and not believe in God. That that was accidental, that from that little seed, this beautiful baby came out with all those internal organs and miles of blood vessels inside that body.

Anyway, so he prayed, and not only that, it says he feared God, verse 2. That means he had a reverence for this unknown God. That's another very important quality for men to have. A reverence for God.

The word fear is not the fear of being afraid, but a reverence for God. Like someone said, there are two types of fear of God. One is the fear that God may hurt me.

That's what most people have. I have the fear that I may hurt God. Which fear do you have? That God may hurt you? Or that you may hurt God? Many years ago, I read that last verse of Psalm 139, which says, Search me, O God, and try me, and see if there's any wicked way in me.

The better phrase of that in the Living Bible is, Lord, point out anything in me that makes you sad. And I remember years ago, I printed it out on a little card and gave it to all the people in our church in Bangalore. I said, keep this on your table.

Lord, point out anything you find in me, not that makes you angry, that makes you sad. Very good verse to remember. It's a Living Bible paraphrase of those last verses of Psalm 139.

Lord, point out anything you find in me that's making you sad. I don't want to make you sad. I'm not afraid of a God who's making me angry.

I'm not afraid of a God who hurt me. I'm afraid I may hurt God. I don't want to.

After all that He's done for me, first of all, I don't want to hurt Him. And second, I want to respond in love to Him. This man Cornelius did not know anything.

Yet God cared for him so much that He sent an angel to speak to him, to reach out to him, this unknown person out there who was not one of God's chosen people, the Jews. And what I wanted to point out to you here is that angel who knew the gospel better than anybody else, he could have explained the gospel a hundred times better than anybody else to Cornelius. Cornelius, that angel could have said, you know, in the sight of a holy God, you're a sinner.

And Cornelius would have said, yes. And then, you know, that sin makes you guilty before God. He'd say, yes, sir.

And it can take you to hell. Cornelius says, yes, sir. But let me tell you the good news.

God sent His Son to earth. Really? His name was Jesus. Here in this land of Israel, He was crucified.

And probably Cornelius had heard about it, some false prophet about Jesus being crucified. He said, was that the Son of God? He says, yes. And, you know, He rose up from the dead to prove that He was God three days later.

And He went up to heaven. He's alive. And He's the one who has sent me to you.

You can pray to Him. He will listen to you. And He says, really? Yes, you can be a child of God right now.

Just ask Jesus to come into your heart. The angel never said that. That's what I want to point out to you.

He said, please send first five for a man called Peter. I would love to give you the gospel, Cornelius. But God has not permitted me to give you this gospel.

For one reason, I have not experienced the forgiveness of sins. Because I never sinned. Only someone who has sinned and experienced God's forgiveness can give you the gospel.

So I'm sorry, Cornelius. If I were to expand his words, that's it. You got to send.

I know it'll take time. I may take a few days. But you got to wait.

If it's the facts of the gospel, I can give it to you right now. But God does not permit us to speak information. The angel would say, He wants us to speak from our experience.

And I have no experience of forgiveness. Because I've never sinned. You have to send for somebody who has sinned and was forgiven.

Brothers, do you qualify? Then you're the man whom God wants more than the angels to proclaim His truth wherever you are. Maybe you're not skilled in speaking. Doesn't matter.

Can you tell people that God loves you? Can you tell people that you're a wretched sinner and that Jesus had mercy on you? You don't have to tell them all the details of your sin. Please don't ever do that. Why pollute other people's minds with your corruption? Your mind is corrupted enough with it.

Don't add it to other people's minds. Bury it. But tell people that you were forgiven.

What were the sins Paul committed in his younger days? I don't know. David tells us many times that he sinned in his younger days. What? Can you tell me? No, I won't tell you.

It's between me and God. I don't tell people all the sins I committed in my younger days. They're all blotted out.

God says, I will not remember them. And if I remember them, I will remember them before God. Never before men.

Before men, I only know I was a sinner and Jesus saved me. So he sends for Peter. And then Peter comes.

I don't know how many days it took. So on the next day, it says, the next day, verse nine, Peter went up to pray. And then while there, God had a tough time trying to convince Peter to go and preach to Cornelius because no Jew would ever go to preach to a Gentile.

Peter, even though he's filled with the Holy Spirit, he had this idea that God loves the Jews only. It was a racist feeling that all the Jews had. Racism is not something only in this country or even in India, you have upper caste and low caste.

It's a form of racism. In every country, it is there. Some countries, they talk more about it, but it is there in every country.

I presume in every community, there's sort of one group looking down on the other. One group of whites looking down another group of whites and one group of blacks looking down one group of brownies looking down another brownies. It's all there in every country.

And I don't blame Peter because all his life, he had been taught, you know what the Jews were taught to pray. Jewish men were taught to pray every morning. I've read this somewhere.

Oh God, I thank you that I'm not a Gentile. That means a non-Jew. I thank you that I'm not a slave.

And I thank you that I'm not a woman. Imagine that's what the men used to pray to God. So I heard.

It was a pretty conceited prayer. So imagine a man like Peter who had prayed that for years, now being told to go to a Gentile. And he said, no, I can't go.

And then the Lord gives him this vision and says, you know, of all types of animals, which the Jewish law had forbidden him to eat. And he said in verse 14, I've never eaten anything unholy and unclean. The book of Leviticus says I shouldn't touch these things.

And the Lord is trying to teach, you know, that sheet contained verse 12, animals, crawling creatures, things Leviticus had said clearly forbidden the Jews from eating. Eat. And Peter says, I've never eaten anything.

He's trying to tell God the rules of holiness. I can't eat anything. And the voice, you know, sometimes we can have that attitude too.

There are people who try to be holier than Jesus. Yeah, I've come across people like that. Sometimes we ourselves try to make all type of rules that Jesus never made.

Then we are like the Pharisees. The Pharisees tried to be holier than God. That's how they became Pharisees.

And Jesus said, I don't desire all your sacrifices. I want compassion. I desire mercy more than sacrifice.

I want to tell you, my dear brothers, God desires mercy more than sacrifice. Of course, sacrifice is important. But I remember when we were building our first church building in Bangalore, after six years of meeting in my home.

And in 1981, we had our first church building. That is a miracle for us. We never expected we could have one.

But God wanted to reach more people. That's the only reason he moved us out of my house into a building. And of course, a house is much better.

I remember my boys said, Oh, Daddy, why are they all going away? We love to have the meetings in our home, even if it's inconvenient. Don't they like us? I said, No, we got to reach more people. And then one of the brothers asked me, What verse shall we put behind the pulpit? And I said, What is the biggest danger we who preach holiness face? I said, I'll tell you from my experience, is being unmerciful to other people who are not holy.

That is the biggest sin we face. So let's have a verse like that relates to that. So I said, put up this verse.

Be merciful to others, just as God has been merciful to you. And for the last, what is it, 42 years, we've had that verse behind the pulpit. To remind all who come in, everyone who still stands in that pulpit, to preach with mercy, and not to preach like the Pharisees.

You walk up to the pulpit, and what you see there is be merciful to others as God's been merciful to you. Then you stand in the pulpit. And in the front of the pulpit, we have for everybody who accuses us of being perfect.

We have a verse written in the front of our pulpit. Hebrews 6.1, Let us press on to perfection. Telling everybody, hey fellas, we're not perfect.

We are pressing on to perfection. We invite you to press on to perfection. Let us, not let me, let us.

We're all in the same boat. We're imperfect. It's wonderful to have that attitude when you stand in a pulpit, that you're reminded that you've got to be merciful to everyone, because God has been so merciful to you.

And to remind everybody that we're not perfect. I'm not perfect, neither are you. We're all at different stages in that climbing the mountain of perfection.

Jesus is on the top, perfect. Paul reached somewhere up there, and we're following Paul and the other apostles, and there are others behind us, some ahead of us, pressing on to perfection. So I mentioned this to say, just to point out one thing, that God needs men.

The angels could have done a million times better job than you and me, but he wants people who have experienced forgiveness, who have experienced the mercy of God, because the world is full of sinners, who some people think God have a hard, you know, most of the idols of the heathen. I've seen a lot of those idols in the temples. The faces of their gods look so hideous, and you've got to see them.

I've never seen an idol of a very loving, smiling, compassionate. I'll tell you honestly, I've not seen it. Every temple I go to, I see a fierce, where did I get you, that type of face.

And we proclaim a Jesus who is the friend of sinners. When you proclaim Jesus, dear brothers, to others, is it the friend of sinners? Especially those who have come to our CFC churches and who have heard my messages on YouTube. Yeah, we have to preach holiness.

All the apostles preach holiness, but it must be preached from the heart of compassion, and you know whether you have that. And it's very easy to have a heart of compassion if you just look back to see what you were like, the pit from which you were dug. The Lord sometimes used to tell the Israelites, look at the pit from which I dug you fellows out.

For them, that pit was some heathen country called Ur of the Chaldees, where Abraham was a heathen worshipping heathen gods. He says, that's the pit I dug you fellows out from. Don't ever forget that.

And I want to remember all my life the pit that God pulled me out of, because then I can grow in holiness. Turn with me to 2nd Peter and chapter 1. 2nd Peter chapter 1. There are some fantastic verses in this first chapter, some amazing verses which you almost don't find anywhere else. Let's begin with verse 2. Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.

If you want more grace in your life, according to this, better get to know God better. Read the Bible. It's the only book in the world that will tell you what God is like.

Listening to Zak Poonen on YouTube will not help you to know what God is like if you don't read the Bible. I always seek to point people to the scripture. Grace and peace through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

Jesus said in John 17 3, this is eternal life, that they might know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom is thou sent. Eternal life is not living forever. No.

No, that's not the meaning of eternal life. Jesus defined it in John 17 3 as eternal life is not length of life. It is quality of life, not quantity of life, but quality of life.

Many people think of eternal means quantity. No. Eternal means quality.

John 17 3 is crystal clear on that. This is eternal life, the definition of eternal life that Jesus gave, that they may know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. That's how we get eternal life.

And the more you know God and the more you know Jesus, the more you have of eternal life. You say, how can I have more of eternal life? Either I have it or I don't have it. That is the mathematical way of counting eternity.

That's because we are so mathematical, we think we are cleverer than Jesus. He said it's not that way. You're thinking in terms of quantity.

It's got nothing to do with quantity. The fact that you're going to live for eternity, live forever. People who go to hell live forever.

Then they've got eternal life too. That's the clearest proof that that's not the meaning of eternal life. Eternity means having no beginning and no end.

Who's got that life? Only God. God is the only eternal person because he had no beginning. And when he gives us his life through the Holy Spirit, that is eternal life.

It's the very life of God that comes to us through Christ. And if I get to know him more and know Jesus Christ more, and that's through the scriptures, I will have more and more of this eternal life. Not quantity, no, quality.

A life of perfect love, a heart that does not love anyone other than God, but through that love loves everybody else as Jesus loved me. So then he goes on to say in verse 3, God's divine power has given us everything necessary not only for life but for godliness. Godliness is a word you find in the God in character.

And it says here that God's divine power has given us everything to enable us to partake of his godliness. And that also comes again back to the same thing, knowledge of God, knowing God, knowing God, knowing God. This is the thing.

This is eternal life. They might know the verse 2 in the knowledge of God. Verse 3, through the true knowledge of him.

So the Christian life is a growth in knowing Jesus better and better and better and better, knowing our heavenly father better and better and better. That is how we overcome sin. And you can know the Bible like the Pharisees and not know God at all.

That's why we need the Holy Spirit. That's why when you come to the Bible you must say, open my eyes, Lord. I can't understand this with my human cleverness.

You know that verse in Matthew 11 where Jesus said, I think it was 18 to 20 or 25 or something, Father, I thank you that you've hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent people of the earth and revealed them to? To who? Babies. What does a baby know about the Bible, about God? So I read that and I said, Lord, I want to come to the Bible like a little baby knowing nothing. You know when a baby is grown up and beginning to speak and pronounces the words wrong and his mother says, oh my darling, that's not the way to say that word.

This is the correct pronunciation. Thank you, mama. Okay, I'll pronounce it like that.

Imagine going to scriptures like that. And the Lord says, that's not the meaning of that verse. You're depending too much on your cleverness.

With your cleverness, you try to understand that verse, you'll get it all wrong. You'll pronounce that word wrong. I'll teach you.

I said, Lord, what do babies have that I don't have? And Jesus said, humility. He took up a baby once and he said to his disciples in Matthew 18, if you humble yourself like this baby, you can enter God's kingdom. So I see the primary characteristic that Jesus emphasized in a baby is humility.

And I have meditated much on the humility of a baby. Of course, I meditate on the humility of Jesus Christ. There are only two examples for me of humility.

One is Jesus himself. Learn from me for I'm humble of heart, he said in Matthew 11 verse 29. So I want to look at Jesus' life and see his humility in different circumstances.

I see, oh, why did he do it like that? Because he was humble. Why did he heal somebody and tell people, don't tell anyone. So different from today's preachers who say, get the video camera here and I'm going to pray for this man.

Jesus was so different. When you go, don't tell anybody that I healed you. Go quietly and give thanks to God.

That's humility. We live in a world where people want to advertise themselves. The Christian world, Christendom is full of preachers who want to advertise themselves, what they're doing.

And I'm doing a little better than that guy. And so many million people came to my meeting. And you know, how many people came to Jesus meetings? John chapter six is a great chapter.

It starts with 5,000 men whom he fed plus women and children, probably 10,000 people. It's a great chapter. It begins with 10,000 and ends with 11.

You know why? Because Jesus preached the cross. How do you reduce 10,000 people to 11? While the world is, preachers are thinking how to increase my congregation of 11 to 10,000. Jesus is teaching us how to reduce 10,000 to 11.

Read John chapter six. You've got to eat my flesh and drink my blood. And I don't have time to show you all these verses.

You look at it in your own time, John six. And people got offended and went away. They were saying, this man's telling us to be cannibals.

Eat his flesh. I mean, we were told not even to eat the flesh of some animals which are unclean. And he's telling us to eat his flesh and drink his blood.

We were told never to drink the blood of animals. This can't be a prophet of God. And he says, great crowds left him.

There were 10,000 to start with. And Jesus did not stop hey, don't go away. I'll explain to you what I didn't mean really my flesh and my blood.

He did not give a word of explanation. Why didn't he do that? Because he knew these people don't have a heart to take up the cross. What's he was explaining to them? That'll be intellect to intellect.

Whereas Jesus always spoke heart to heart. And he was not going to explain to their intellects what I meant is not cannibalism folks. I'm not a cannibal.

I'm not asking you to be to that. I'm asking you to die to yourself. This is the worst part of thing hinders you from following the Lord.

But he knew that they didn't have a heart to hear that. And so when he went away and he says, this is the part I like the best. At the end of John six, there were 12 left, his disciples and the average preacher would have said, hey, I hope you folks won't leave me.

I like these others. No. You know what Jesus said to them? Do you also want to leave? Welcome.

And one man gets up and says, you know who that man was? Peter. Jesus had just called him Satan. Matthew 16 is about the same time as John six.

Get behind me Satan, you who tell me not to go to the cross. That was to Peter. He never called Judas Iscariot Satan.

You know what he called Judas Iscariot in the garden of Gethsemane? Friend. Friend. He came as a friend of sinners.

But this is how most wholehearted, loyal disciple who had given up his fishing nets and everything to follow him. He calls him Satan. You know, God can rebuke you very strongly when you go astray.

If he knows that you can bear it. Judas couldn't bear it. He couldn't bear rebuke.

Even a small thing. Have you noticed the time when he went to betray Jesus is very interesting. I don't have time to show you all these verses.

But read Matthew 26, John 12. These chapters where somebody came to anoint the feet of Jesus. And Judas Iscariot says, oh, this could have been sold for 300 pence and given to the poor.

Why waste it on the feet of Jesus, this expensive ointment? And Jesus, he doesn't rebuke him. He says in a very gentle way, the poor you always have with you. You can give it any time to them.

But me you don't have always. This woman has done a wonderful thing. She is anointing the feet of Jesus.

She has anointed me in advance for my burial. You know, the Jewish people anointed with perfume, the bodies that were of dead people who are buried. And she said, he she has anointed me in advance for the

burial.

And she's the only one who could do it. The people who went to anoint Jesus on the Sunday to anoint his body, they couldn't get it. They couldn't get a chance because he had risen.

One woman got a chance to anoint the body of Jesus for his burial. That was Mary. She did it before.

She's telling us, brothers, take the opportunity to do something when you get it. An opportunity to do something for the Lord. Take it when you get it.

Tomorrow you may not get it. That's what I learned from that. But that's all he said.

And Judas got so offended. With what sort of rebuke was that? He got offended that his correction was not accepted. Jesus didn't say, yeah, yeah, that's right.

You know, actually you could have given this to the poor Mary. Why waste it on me? He never said that. He appreciated her.

And you know, the next verse, it says, he went out and sought to betray him. You see the connection? This chap has offended me publicly. I'm going to get my back, get my own back on it.

How do you feel when somebody has insulted you publicly? Can you think back to instances where it was not even an insult, a small word that somebody said and you got so offended? Maybe a preacher spoke in a way that was directly to you and people in the church knew it and you got offended. Why not take it? Don't be like Judas. You know, in the Psalm, Psalm 119 is a great Psalm.

Blessed are those who love thy law. Nothing shall offend them. I like that verse.

I want to live in that verse. That's how I prove I love God's word. You say you love God's word, but tell me honestly, can anybody offend you? Can you honestly say nothing offends me? Nothing that people say, nothing that people do.

People let me down. People publicly humiliate me. I will not be offended.

Blessed are they who love the law of God. Nothing will offend them. If you get offended, it proves you don't love God's word.

Take these verses seriously. You know, I feel that we read so quickly and so fast that we miss meditating. Meditate on God's word, dear brothers.

Be a man of God. Get to know God through his word by meditating on his word. God's riches are given to those who meditate.

It says in the Proverbs, there is the glory of God to conceal a matter. I don't know, 21 or 27 or something like that, one of those chapters. Proverbs is very difficult for me to remember.

It's the glory of God to conceal a matter, but it's the glory of kings to search it out. Do you find it sometimes? I don't know if it's 21.1 or 27.1, any one of those. Anyway, don't waste your time now looking for it.

You can find it later. Believe me, it's in scripture. It is the glory of God to conceal a matter and it's the glory of kings to search it out.

So I've taken it like that, that there are things concealed in the Bible, and that's the glory of God. He's decided to hide it. It's not open for clever people to understand, but it's the glory of a king, and I'm a king in Christ, to search it out.

And I'll find it out if I have the spirit of a child, because revelation is given to those who come with the spirit of a child. I've really sought, not only in my studying scripture, but also in my preaching. I say, Lord, I want to speak in such a way that a 10-year-old sitting there will understand me, not with big, huge words that they can't understand and not even with great thoughts which they can't grasp.

I want to be simple, so that if anybody—I remember once a brother said to me, Brother Zack is from some other country. He said, Brother Zack, we listened to you on YouTube, and the one who's most eager to hear you is my 10-year-old son. I said, that excited me more than if some king had said he'd love to hear me or some president of some country.

That 10-year-old wanted to hear me. I said, great. That means he understands what I'm saying.

I believe that's how Jesus spoke. He spoke in a way that children could understand. The way he used illustrations.

No prophet used illustrations like Jesus did. No apostle used illustrations like Jesus did. You compare Jesus with all the prophets in the Old Testament.

They occasionally used an illustration, but no one like Jesus. All the time he was using illustrations. You see the epistles.

There are a few illustrations, but nothing like Jesus. I say, I patterned my preaching after Jesus to try and make it simple, understandable, comes from my own experience, and using illustrations. By the way, you know a lot of my illustrations.

There's a brother in Pittsburgh called Southeast Bennett who has drawn pictures. We go to CFC Pittsburgh, and I think it's connected to our CFC India also. That's one of our churches, by the way.

He's done a number of illustrations of Mary's truths. Just the other day, someone was saying he goes through those illustrations with his children in the family. I love that.

Illustrations illustrate a truth so well. I remember one Santosh in a message said, when a totally blind man gets up in the morning, what does he look for first? His cane. He cannot go anywhere without that cane.

As soon as he gets out of bed, he says, where's my cane? He said, that's how we should be when we get up in the morning. Where's my Lord? I want to lean on him throughout this day. Many people who have been blessed by that simple illustration.

It's not a great powerful illustration. Very meaningful. That's how we must be from the moment we get up.

I want to lean on you. So here in 2 Peter, it says here, God has given us everything, verse 3, pertaining to life and godliness through the knowledge of him. And then look at this fantastic verse, verse 4. There are so many precious and magnificent promises given us in his word.

Precious, magnificent, the most wonderful promises in God's word are given us for what purpose? Not to heal all our sicknesses, not to make our businesses prosper, not to help us to get a better job, not to help us get a beautiful wife. No. All these wonderful promises are so that we may partake of the divine nature.

Do you know that the most wonderful promises in the entire Bible are given to you to give you the most wonderful thing you can have as a human being, and that's not a better job, or a more beautiful wife, or a bigger bank account, nothing of the sort, or healing from all your sicknesses. No, however wonderful they may be, it is to partake of God's nature. If you understand that, you learn to pray properly.

You say, we must claim the promises of God. I've heard many people say that. What for? To get some answer for something in your home, or to get a job? No, first of all, to partake of his divine nature, because that's the only way, verse 4, that you can escape all the corruption that is in the world caused by lust.

By man's uncontrolled desire, that's lust, and that has produced corruption. For 6,000 years from the time of Adam, man's passionate desire has brought corruption, corruption, corruption, but I speak on behalf of God, otherwise I wouldn't be sitting here. I mean, if I don't expect God to speak through me, I shouldn't be sitting here at all.

I should be sitting there and listening, but I expect God to speak through me. And I pray for that, and I've prayed many times, and I'll tell you how I pray. I say, Lord, I always want, when I get into the pulpit, I always want to be like that branch in the tree.

I've been preaching, by the way, for 60 years. The first time I preached to a crowd of 5,000 people for about one hour was when I was 23 and a half years old. God had anointed me, and people were blessed.

That wasn't me. I was baptized only two and a half years before that. I was anointed, that's all.

God can do that to anybody. He used Samuel when he was a small boy. So there's nothing special about that.

I wasn't holy. You know, that took a long time to overcome sin. But with all these 60 years of experience of preaching, I'm like the branch that's been in the tree for 60 years, produced a lot of fruit, a lot of fruit.

You cut it off today, how much fruit can it get? Zero. That's what I recognize when I get into the pulpit. 60 years of experience doesn't not help me one bit to produce fruit if I'm not in the branch, in the tree today, as helpless as I was on the first day.

I'm saying this for your encouragement and instruction. Remain helpless as helpless as a branch in a tree for whatever ministry you're called. Are you an elder in some church? Oh, boy, you really need to be like that branch in the tree.

Don't think you can bring fruit without being like a helpless branch in a tree. Use that picture. It's the perfect picture of faith I have found in the Bible.

An illustration. I love illustrations. What is an illustration of faith? A branch in a tree.

John 15.5. I'm the vine and you're the branches. You can do nothing without me. Lord, I want to learn that.

And I think I have learned it. There were times when I thought I could do a few things without him and I made a mess. No, I don't.

I don't think so. I've learned through years of failure that I can't do anything useful. You know, I remember reading a great statement by a great man of God called C.T. Studd, who was one of the world's best cricketers at the age of 20 in England, way back in the early 1900s.

And he got converted in a meeting in D.L. Moody, preaching in England. And he gave up his brilliant cricketing career. He could have become the world's greatest cricketer known for years, but he gave it up.

And he was from a very wealthy family and he gave up all his money. And before he got married, he kept a little bit for his wife. He married a Salvation Army girl.

He said, I like these, he called them the hallelujah girls. You know, always say hallelujah. I want a girl like that with my wife.

We'll always be happy and hallelujah. And so he told her, I've given up all. I want to tell you, I'm letting you know, my father was very wealthy.

I got an inheritance. Most of it I gave for some orphan homes and some missionary work and some evangelist work. But I kept a little bit for our marriage and for our family.

And you know what she replied to her? What did Jesus tell the rich young man to do? Go and sell all that you have. So he gave away that also. And he started life with zero.

And God used him mightily. He went to China, passionate desire to bring the Chinese people to Christ. And he got so sick.

I don't know if it's asthma or something. And, you know, you've got to be medically qualified every year to continue as a missionary. So the doctor said unfit to be a missionary.

He went back to England. Then he tried to come to India. And he went to one or two parts of India.

And again, he was sick. He went back and no mission would accept him. Because everybody requires rightfully that you must be medically fit to go out into this mission field.

It's tough. So you know what he did? He started his own mission. He says, nobody will accept me.

I'm going to start a mission. And where should I go to? I shall go to some place that has never been evangelized. The Congo, right in the middle of Africa.

And he called his mission the heart of Africa mission. And he said, if you want to join me, you have to have a degree called DCD, not DD. DD is Doctor of Divinity.

DCD is a little different. And he used what some people would call a swear word. DCD means I don't care a damn what anybody thinks about me.

If you can say, I don't care a damn what anybody thinks about me, come and join my mission. Because all types of people will criticize you for this and that. And the other, you're not bothered what people say.

Otherwise, you don't qualify to me. And the other thing he said was he wrote a little tract called Chocolate Soldier. He says, most Christians, they melt in the heat.

They're like chocolates. Some little pressure comes and they melt. He says, God doesn't want any chocolate soldiers.

He was a radical man. And I admire him greatly. They say that when he went into Congo, in those villages, there were no believers.

When he left, there were about 10,000. He spent his life there. He couldn't bring his wife with him because she was also a bit sick.

He had two, three daughters. So his wife stayed in England and supported him. People sent money for his work and she took care of that.

And he married his daughters off to godly men and they became missionaries. Wonderful man, a tremendous man of God. I have great respect for him.

Read his biography sometime called C.D. Studd, Cricketer and Pioneer by his, I think it's his son-in-law by Norman Grubb. But there was one thing he said, which I greatly appreciated, but I differed with him slightly. It's not wrong to differ with even a godly man.

He said a beautiful statement, only one life, it will soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last. That's quoted by many people around the world.

And I thought about it a lot through the years. And I said, there are a lot of people who think they're doing something for Christ. The world is full of people who are doing this in the name of Christ.

I see in India, all types of people in the name of Christ, they are sending prayer letters, asking for money in the name of Christ, which Christ never did. And doing atrocious things in the name of Christ. Only what's done for Christ will last.

How will I make clear to them, it is not what you do for Christ that's going to last forever. So I changed it slightly. And I have it written on the front of my door in my home back in Bangalore, right outside the house.

Only one life, it will soon be past. Only what Christ does through me will last. And there's a lot of difference between that and what I do for Christ.

I'm not critical. I'm not even 1% of C.T. Studd, so I'm not critical of him. But I thought about it more.

And I'm sure, though he expressed it like that, he meant exactly what I'm saying. Sometimes a man doesn't express things very clearly. But it was Christ who worked through C.T. Studd.

So he did more for God than I have ever done. It is the way he expressed it. We don't criticize a person for the way they express something.

But remember this, what you do for Christ will not last. But what Christ does through you, that you can be pretty sure will last forever. So that comes through partaking of the divine nature.

And I want to go a little further in 2 Peter 1, where it says, I want you to grow spiritually, verse 5, with your faith, add moral excellence, and then knowledge, self-control, verse 6, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, verse 7, love. And not only these qualities are yours, but they're going to keep on increasing,

verse 8, then you will never be useless. Oh, it's possible for a believer to be useless.

That's what it says here. But if you have these qualities in increasing, then you will not be useless. So if you don't want to be a useless believer, please meditate on verse 5 and 6 and see these qualities are increasing in your life, and you will not be unfruitful.

But now listen to this. He who lacks these qualities, if you don't have these qualities, whether you know it or not, you're spiritually blind or short-sighted. And listen to this part, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.

That's the part I wanted to emphasize. Having forgotten his purification from his former sins. So I'm not supposed to forget my purification from my former sins.

I don't have to remember all the sins I committed. No, I can't remember them. I know God says I will not remember them anymore.

But I must never forget what I was purified from. The gutter from which God picked me up. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind, but now I see. And I can sing that till the end of my life. I must never forget it.

The Lord used to tell the Israelites, don't forget the pit from which I dug you out. Your forefather Abraham was out there worshiping idols in Ur of the Chaldees. That is the pit he was in, and I pulled him out from there.

And that's why you guys are knowing the true God, you Jewish people. What about us? I know I was in a pit. I was born in a Christian family with God-fearing parents who were born again, who sent me to Sunday school from the earliest age, and protected me from so many things.

But I was in a pit. Self-righteousness is the biggest pit you can be in. The publican who said, Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner, in prayer, he was not in such a deep pit as the Pharisee who said, oh, I thank God I'm not like that publican over there.

That guy was in a deeper pit. Self-righteousness is the deepest pit you can be in. And especially in a church like ours that preaches holiness, be merciful to others as God's been merciful to you.

And when we preach to people in other denominations who don't have light that God has given us, let's never look down our nose upon them. Oh, they don't have the light we have on overcoming sin or anything like that. Let me demonstrate by my life that sin does not have power over me.

And let me acknowledge in my life what I say is almost the last statement in the Bible before the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation is mostly about the future. What is the last statement? Have you noticed it? Jude.

Jude is the book before Revelation. This is the last statement in the Bible before the book of Revelation. Jude 24, God is able to keep you from falling and stumbling.

You cannot keep yourself. God can keep you from stumbling. God alone can make you stand one day in his presence, blameless, with great joy.

To him alone be all the glory. I love that. The last statement in the Bible before the book of Revelation.

Lord, I cannot keep myself, but you can keep me from even stumbling, even when falling. Falling is when you fall flat on the ground. Stumbling is you trip over a stone and you sort of gather yours.

You don't stumble, fall, but you sort of stumble and stand up. He can even keep you from stumbling and present you one day blameless, with great joy. I say, Lord, only you can do that.

I never want to forget it. If I've got a little victory over sin today, more than another, more than another brother, let me never gloat over that. Never despise your wife, brothers, if you find that she has a failing which you don't have.

Maybe you overcome your bad temper, but she hasn't overcome her temper yet. Okay, who gave you that ability? He has kept you from falling. Be merciful to your marriage partner.

If you look down on her, you won't be able to help her. Jesus came here as a perfect man and looked down at nobody. And I'll close with this classic example.

There was a law in the Old Testament in the book of Deuteronomy that said, if a woman is caught in adultery, there's only one thing to be done. Take her outside the city and stone her to death. I haven't thought about that.

I thought if a hundred people are throwing stones at me, boy, take a long for me to die. I wish they'd just cut off my neck. God said, stone her, stone her, stone her to death.

Let her suffer, suffer, suffer, suffer, suffer, so that people see what a terrible thing adultery is. And so the Pharisees caught a woman adultery and brought her to Jesus and said, Master, it's written in the law. And they did not know that this Jesus, when he was in heaven, was the one who gave that law to Moses.

And Jesus knew it. Yeah, yeah. I remember giving that law to Moses 1,500 years ago.

Yeah, I gave that law. I was the one who gave that law, stoned the woman to death. And said, Moses has said this woman must be stoned to death.

What do you say? And you know, Jesus was human as a man. Even though he was God, he had limited himself. He didn't have the answer immediately.

So like we sometimes do with a pencil, with his hand, he doodled on the ground. What is he doing? He's waiting. Father, what was the answer? What's the answer for this one? And the father says, tell them the one who without sin can throw the first stone.

So he lifts himself up and says, I thank God for that example, you know, because sometimes I don't have an answer immediately to somebody trying to trap me somewhere. And I want to, in my mind, at least doodle a bit before I give the answer. And I say, Lord, what shall I say to this guy? And he was without sin, cast the first stone.

They all went away. At last, there was one man left who had without sin. He could cast the first stone.

That's what Jesus said. That was him. Why didn't he do it? Why didn't he obey the law he gave to Moses 1,500 years earlier? Why didn't he do what he himself should be done? Why didn't he stoop down and

take a stone? Because he did not come to earth to throw stones at people.

Don't live your life throwing stones at others with words. Learn from Jesus. Even if someone's adulterous, or a woman, Samaria, five times divorced, now sleeping with a man.

I believe Jesus saved her soul. Not only saved her soul, sent her into Samaria as an evangelist and brought the whole town to listen to him. What the apostles could not do, that woman did.

I am amazed at how Jesus uses people, the most unlikely people. I was the most unlikely person I believe God could use to preach the God's word. In my days in school, I was so timid.

I never took part in any public speaking. I've never in my life in school spoken in any public speaking contest. I was shy, reserved.

I was short, very young. And when I was selected for the military academy, people in my class laughed at me. They said, Zack, you're going to defend our country.

And they could have also loved you. Oh, you're going to be a servant of God, is it? But God picks up those who are unfit and unlikely. And I'm very thankful that he's given me all these years to serve him and given me health, even at the age of 83, to serve him and give me a mind to speak God's word clearly.

And sometimes, you know, when people ask me tough questions like stone this woman, I'll give you one last example that I found, where I had to doodle in my mind for a little. I was some years ago, it was, I think it was in North Carolina or somewhere, I went to a meeting of, I think they were Amish or Mennonite converts. I don't remember now.

They invited me that somebody had someone, their leader had heard me preach, but I know that none of them had cars. It's the only time I got driven to the church building in a horse-ridden carriage. It was great.

I wish somebody would take a photograph, but they don't allow photographs. Otherwise, I'd have got a photograph of me riding in that. So there's some type, you know, one of these groups that don't believe in cars and electricity and all that.

Anyway, that man was gracious. He was born again. So I went to the meeting, it was a full day conference with two, three sessions in between they had lunch.

And I was sitting at the table with all these men, all bearded, and me sitting there with clean shaven face. And one of them tried to, was not very happy with the words I preached. He wanted to humiliate me at the table while we were eating.

He said, Zach, did God make a mistake when he gave you hair on your face? Or did you make a mistake by shaving it all off? What he meant is unlike all the rest of us who have not made that mistake. And this is the time for doodling. Lord, what shall I say? What shall I say? And the Lord gave me an answer.

Dear brother, I want to say this graciously. Did God give you a mistake when he gave nails in your fingers? Or did you make a mistake when you cut them all off? Silence. There was no further discussion on that subject.

I never forget how, I didn't want to humiliate him. I changed the subject immediately. I didn't want to embarrass him.

So I immediately, you've got to do that. When you embarrass somebody, you've got to immediately move to some other subject so that he doesn't feel small. He tried to make me feel small.

I'm not going to take revenge on him by making him feel small. So I immediately said that and I changed the subject and moved to something else from God's word. I will give you, many times I've claimed this promise.

You can claim it. Luke 21 15. I will give you a mouth and a wisdom that none of your enemies will be able to resist.

What a word. You know, there are wonderful treasures in God's word. I will give you a mouth and a wisdom that none of your enemies will be able to gainsay or resist.

I think am I right in that? My quotation, Luke 21 15. Yes. Mutturance and wisdom that none of your opponents, see I speak in the King James version because that's the first version I read, that none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.

Wonderful. Remember these promises, brothers. You'll be able to bless others within a time of need.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we bow before you, we pray that we may not be able to remember everything that we heard that you spoke to us, but remind us at the right time of what we need to be reminded of. Thank you.

In Jesus name. Amen.

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

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