

Questions About Family Life And The Church

by Zac Poonen

This sermon addresses various practical questions concerning family relationships, marriage, church dynamics, and personal spiritual growth. It emphasizes the importance of humility, genuine repentance, and seeking the guidance of elders in making important decisions. The speaker highlights the need for fruitfulness in one's life as evidence of true conversion and readiness for baptism. Additionally, the sermon touches on the dangers of pride and the significance of maintaining a pure and humble heart before God.

Scripture: Romans 8:9, John 20:22, Matthew 7:20, Genesis 1:27, James 4:6

Topics: "Family Relationships", "Humility in Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon addresses various practical questions concerning family relationships, marriage, church dynamics, and personal spiritual growth. It emphasizes the importance of humility, genuine repentance, and seeking the guidance of elders in making important decisions. The speaker highlights the need for fruitfulness in one's life as evidence of true conversion and readiness for baptism. Additionally, the sermon touches on the dangers of pride and the significance of maintaining a pure and humble heart before God.

Transcript

Questions concerning family, these are written by many different people. I asked some of the elders also to write questions that could be the need of people. What about husbands who spend a lot of time with their work, but don't help their wives and children at home? What if a husband doesn't care for this? Well, a wife should first of all pray, number one.

And then lovingly say to your husband, see, it will be a great help to me if you can help me with some of the work and that we spend some time together so we continue to get to know each other and help the children. If you say it in a loving way, instead of saying, why in the world don't you help me? That's not the way to talk. You know, whenever you want to win your husband, put your arm around him and say, darling, can I say something to you? Make something good for a meal first.

After that, you know the way to a man's heart is through the stomach. Have you heard that? So, try and reach his heart through his stomach first and then speak lovingly and say. Many things you can accomplish if you say lovingly.

Sometimes husbands don't think about it. I've often said, if you want to know how selfish you are, get married. And you'll discover how selfish you are, both husbands and wives.

And once you have one child, you'll discover even more how selfish you are. Two children, you'll discover even more. I'm telling you from my own experience.

I discovered how selfish I am. I'm still discovering areas where I'm selfish. I need to cleanse myself.

I'm not like Jesus. Jesus was the one who was 100% free from selfishness. If you think you're 100% free from selfishness, you must be really arrogant to say that you've become like Christ.

I want to tell you, in Jesus' name, you are selfish. I know I am. But I'm discovering those layers of the onion that I'm peeling off little by little by little.

But it takes time. So, husbands and wives, please think about that. And you need to spend time together.

And sometimes, you know, we allow children to go to bed very late. I think it's a foolish thing. I believe we should put our children to bed early so that they get a good sleep before they go to school next day.

And once they've gone to bed early, whichever time you decide, then it's a good time for husband and wife, even when you're lying in bed or just sitting around, even for 15 minutes, just to talk together. You must spend that time, particularly if you've been at work the whole day. Very, very important to spend a little time as husband and wife together.

I want to say that, please, dear brothers and sisters, make that a priority. And please put your children to bed early so that it's good for them and good for your relationship as husband and wife. I'm not making a law, but I'm making a very important suggestion.

Take time to talk to your husband and wife every day. And say it lovingly. Very often, something is not accomplished because we don't say it lovingly.

Do you know what is the number one thing that women want from their husbands? It's love. More than anything else, they must be assured that you love them. And you must say that to them again and again.

Maybe a hundred times in a year. And do you know what is the most important thing a man wants from a wife? It's not sex, believe me. It is respect.

If you respect your husband, and your husbands love your wife, you'll have a wonderful married life. The Bible says that in Ephesians 5. See to it that you respect your husband. Husbands love your wives.

I'm not telling you something which I invented. It's written in Ephesians 5. You read the last verse of Ephesians 5. See to it that you respect your husband. How many of you wives can honestly say that you respect your husband? How many of you husbands can say that you are trying to love your wife? The wife needs love, the husband needs respect.

That means you must speak to him respectfully. He may be wrong. Tell him he is wrong.

Respectfully. Very very important. That's how you build relationships.

So, to give you the scriptural base for that, let me read to you from Ephesians 5. Ephesians 5. Husbands love your wives. Verse 25. And the wives, see to it, see to it, verse 33, that you respect your husband.

You got it from scripture now. The Holy Spirit says it. Okay.

What should be our relationship to people who have stopped coming to CFC, or relatives who have left CFC? What should be our attitude towards them? Be friendly. I meet people who have left CFC. I never once asked them to come back to CFC.

Believe me, for that matter, I've never asked anybody to join CFC in my life. Not one of you sitting here can say I asked you to join this church. Nobody in all the thousands of people in CFC churches can say, Brother Zach asked us to join this church.

Never. I never ask a person to join our church. I say, if you yourself want to join, if God leads you here, come.

Otherwise, don't come. Go and join whichever church you like. But if I see somebody left our church and gone somewhere, the only thing I ask him when I meet him is, Brother, I hope you're following Jesus wherever you go.

Go somewhere where you really follow Jesus. I'm not interested in bringing him back to CFC. Not at all.

CFC is not the only church that God has in the world, or in India, or in Bangalore. There are many good churches. And some of those churches may be better than some of our CFC churches.

In fact, if a brother is transferred from here to somewhere else, and he goes to a CFC church, and he finds the leader there is not a spiritual man, that also is possible. And may not be a good spirit there, or a good atmosphere. And he finds some other church where the pastor is a humble, God-fearing man.

Maybe a Baptist church, or some other church like that. I would say to them, Brother, don't go to the CFC church. Go to that other Baptist church.

Go where you can be more godly. Go where you can follow Jesus more. I'm not loyal to CFC.

I'm loyal to Jesus Christ. And if a CFC church is not devoted to Christ, I'm sorry, I'm not going to support it. No.

My loyalty is to Christ, and Christ alone. And as long as the CFC church puts Christ first, and its leaders are godly, I will support it. Not otherwise.

So, don't think that if people have gone to some other church, they have gone astray, or become worldly, or anything. OK, another question somebody asked was, Brother Zank, you once said about Gehazi, that because he went after Neyman's money, leprosy came to him, and to his children. And supposing a case where the man is like that, but the wife is God-fearing.

Will the children be affected? The answer is no. The children will not be affected. And there's a verse for that in 1 Corinthians 7, which says like this, 1 Corinthians 7, A woman, verse 13, A woman who has an unbelieving husband, if he agrees to live with her, she must not send her husband away, because, verse 14, the unbelieving husband, the unbeliever husband, is sanctified, set apart, because of his wife being a godly woman.

And the unbelieving wife is set apart and sanctified, because her husband is a believer. And then the children are also set apart, because one person in a home is God-fearing. You don't need both.

It's an amazing verse, in 1 Corinthians 7, verse 14. The word sanctified and all that means set apart. Your children are protected from the world, that's what it means.

Not that they are born again, but they are protected from the world, because one person in that home is born again. So, don't worry if your partner is ungodly. You can still bring up your children in a godly way.

Timothy's father was, as far as we know, an ungodly businessman who had no interest in spiritual things. And she brought up her son to be an apostle. Can you believe that? Amazing.

Amazing woman she was. As parents, how can we protect our teen children from the influence of their friends? By being friendly with your children. That's the way.

If mother and daughter are friendly, she won't be so attracted to other girls. It's because we must talk at their level. Don't, you know, let them be honest with you if they are attracted to some boy or girl in their class.

There's nothing wrong in that. Ask them. Are you attracted to some girl in your class? And he says, yes, so and so.

Don't say, don't tell me you're attracted to that girl. Don't say that. That's the wrong way to react.

They say, you know what you must say? Who's that girl? So and so. Show me that girl next time we go to school and Parents' Day or something. And they'll be friendly with you.

No, you can then give your advice. They'll listen to you. As if you had no attraction to the opposite sex when you were young.

Don't treat your children in a way, just because you're 60 years old and that girl is 16, you expect her to be like you? I think it's absolutely natural for a boy and a girl to be attracted to each other. But it has to be controlled. That's the thing.

So we must be wise. Not tell them what they have is wrong. And if children see that their parents are absolutely honest with them and talk to them at their level, there's more possibility of being able to protect them from bad influences.

Anyway, that's how we did it, my wife and I. My wife more than me. The other is, what if a husband frequently invites his relatives and in-laws and all to come home? There must be a certain amount of balance here. I'm not saying that we should never invite your in-laws or your father-in-law or mother-in-law to come home.

But don't make it very difficult, especially for your wife, if you find your mother is a very dominating type of woman and a lot of Indian mothers are dominating towards their daughter-in-law. I'm sorry to say, many women are like that. They don't know their boundaries.

My wife is a mother-in-law to four girls and I'll tell you, some of them have been married for 14 years. She's had a wonderful relationship with every single one of them. They love to have us there because we don't interfere in the way they run their home.

We don't tell them how to bring up their children. We already had a turn when we had children. Now it is their turn.

Let them bring up their children. We don't tell them what programs their children should watch or what they should do or what they shouldn't do. We don't tell them what to cook or what not to cook or how to run their kitchen.

My wife just goes there and says, in what way can I help you? And if the way they do certain things in a certain way in their house, my wife does it exactly the same way. And if they want their children to do it in a certain way, we do it exactly the same way with our grandchildren. So, never a conflict.

Never a conflict in 14 years. And I don't believe there'll be a conflict if we continue another 25 years. There will not be.

Because we know our boundaries. We're not trying to control somebody else. They're grown up and they've got their own home.

But I find a lot of, not only Indian, even a lot of Western and Indian mothers and fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law, they're sort of controlling. It's evil. In the new covenant, we should be able to prove that your mother-in-law, daughter-in-law relationship can be perfect.

But what if your mother-in-law is not converted? Obviously, she doesn't know. Then you as a husband must not impose such people on your home too frequently and make life miserable for your wife and miserable for your own relationship. So, that doesn't mean you can't have them, but be restrained and restricted.

The husband must tell his parents, don't be a coward. A lot of men are not men. There's a verse in 1 Corinthians 15 which says, Be a man.

Have you read that verse? Be like a man. Don't be a woman. Some men are like women.

And I'll tell you that, that when it comes to talking to their parents, they don't tell them straight. Lovingly, Dad, Mom, please be a little restrained in all the advice you give to my wife, because it's creating problems here. Okay, we respect you, we love you, but we want to have a good relationship in this home.

So, can you please, maybe you did it differently in your home, but this is our home. We do things differently. Please allow us to do something differently.

Say it respectfully, but speak on behalf of your wife to your parents. Or speak on behalf of your husband to your parents. Not to interfere in your family life.

That's what you should do. Okay. If you find your son or daughter is in a wrong relationship, draw them away by speaking to them.

Pray for them. That's the main thing. What if my children don't have an interest to come to church? Well, that may be because you were not insisting on taking them from the time they were one year old.

If you try to instill some value into them when they are 13 years old, you've lost the battle. From childhood, you must bring them to the church meeting. Sometimes they say, I've got an important examination tomorrow.

I used to tell my children, one meeting a week you can come to. Sunday morning. Come for the Sunday morning meeting.

You don't have to come for the Wednesday meeting if you've got exams and other things to study. But I said, God will honor you. I'll tell you that.

You're not going to lose out and miss out on your exam. Sit down late on Saturday and study. Or come back from the church meeting early and sit down on the rest of Sunday and study.

But you don't have to miss two hours on Sunday just to say, I've got an exam tomorrow. I never, never allowed my children to do that and I don't regret it. And they did not fail in any exam because they came to a Sunday morning meeting.

You cannot do it. You cannot honor God and God doesn't honor you. So we've got to teach our children to honor God from early on in life.

This is a question concerning husbands who are away from home and working in other places like Dubai and all these places. Wives are alone very often at home. It's an unfortunate situation in our world today.

Well, then you ought to be a much more involved husband when you do come home. You've got to talk to your wife every day by the phone or something like that and provide for all her needs and ask God for wisdom how to do it. Or even if you're away for a short time from home, make every provision for it.

What about if my husband has died and I'm a single mother and children don't learn to respect me? You've got to pray for them. If they're grown up, there's nothing much you can do. But you must pray for them and tell them firmly.

There you can go to the elders. A widow must have a male head over her for her protection. That is the meaning of a woman covering her head.

I'm under a man's authority. A woman, of course, has got her husband. A young girl has got her father.

What about a widow? She must have some elder brother who can be like a covering for her. When you have that, be equally good friends. Be good friends with that elder brother's wife.

Don't try to get so friendly with the elder brother but not friendly with his wife. That can create problems. I'm just telling you some practical advice.

But you need that protection and you should probably ask an elder to come and speak to your son who is disobedient. There was a question concerning whether we should if our relatives are unconverted, whether we should ask the church to pray for them. I'd say no.

The church has got enough things to pray for than for all the unconverted relatives of all the 500 people sitting here. You must pray for your unconverted relatives because you're the only one who is likely to have a burden for them. Very often people say, I'll pray for someone without any burden.

You pray for something without a burden is like a parrot praying, a parrot repeating something. Worthless. Prayer has got no value if you don't have a burden.

So it's pointless asking people to pray for someone they don't have any burden for. So I wouldn't even waste my time asking for that. The other thing is in our church we've become so large that it's difficult to get to know everybody and so some people have fellowship only with some.

Is there anything wrong with that? There's nothing wrong with it. Jesus had fellowship with three people, Peter, James and John. More than with the others.

I'll tell you honestly. I have fellowship with very few in this church. Many people I don't even know their names.

It's impossible. I'm a human being. And of course in my case I have connection in 11 countries where we have CFC.

I have to fellowship with them. But even the elders who are here, it's impossible for them to have fellowship with everyone equally. But the more wholehearted you are, the more radical, the more willing you are to serve in the church and do something, they will get to know you more and naturally you'll have more fellowship with them.

If you're the type of person who volunteers to come and clean the toilets and do something here on Saturday evenings, naturally such people will have more fellowship together. And you're the lazy person sitting at home watching TV or something. I'm not surprised nobody wants to have fellowship with you.

I'm not at all surprised. In fact they should not have fellowship with you. What will you tell them about? What you watched on TV? No.

So it's perfectly right for those who are really wholehearted and those who want to pray together, those who want to serve together in the church, will have more fellowship. And the others, they can do what they like. Not everybody who comes to CFC regularly is going to go into God's kingdom.

Jesus said that if my sheep hear my voice and they follow me, I give them eternal life. It's possible people sitting here don't follow him and they don't have eternal life. That's the plain truth.

What should be my attitude if I use the services of a brother in the church for some work to be done in my home, for carpentry work or construction work? Now I've had to do that with different brothers in the church in these areas and I've always told them one thing, please put my request last in your list. I don't want to be a priority. Finish all your other work and when you finish your work, when you have time you can do this for me and I want to pay you exactly what you charge other people.

I don't want to take any advantage of you. I would tell them that. I wouldn't hope, oh because I'm a brother, I hope he'll reduce things for me.

That's up to him. But I'm not going to ask for that and I'm not even going to expect that. In fact I'm going to specifically tell him, please charge me your commission.

Do you do that when you ask a brother to do something for you? Do you tell him, brother what is your commission you charge other people? Please, you're my brother, why should I cheat you? Please, I don't know, many of you have got other people to do work for you. I want to ask you whether you told them that. Otherwise you're covetous.

You're a covetous person. You worship money. You want to swindle that poor brother of some percentage because you want to make that money, keep that money yourself.

That's what creates problems. But if you are upright in that area, people will be glad to work for you. They'll come to you and say, got any more work for me? That's the type of relationship you should have in the

church.

Never, never take advantage of a person. If somebody doesn't work for you, you must pay him. Because there's a word in scripture that Jesus said, the laborer is worthy of his hire.

Have you read that verse? Let me show it to you, if you don't know it. It's a word which Jesus said. In Matthew's gospel, and he said it in another connection, but the principle remains the same.

In Matthew chapter 10, he said about, in verse 10 last part, the worker is worthy of his support. And Paul quotes that in 1 Corinthians 9, 14. He says, the Lord said it, the laborer is worthy of his salary.

So, if somebody works for you, you must pay him. Whatever job he does, you don't take advantage of him. In fact, it says in 1 Timothy 6, verse 2, if you have a believer as your master, and you're working for somebody, you must do it even more for him, not less.

We must not take advantage of a believer in that relationship. If I see a brother or sister struggling financially, what should I do? Best thing, if it's a small amount you feel you should give him, give it to him, but please don't give it to him personally. Because you have treated him like a beggar.

You have lowered his dignity. I would never do it. I mean, if he's worked for you, by all means give him a gift.

Otherwise, if you have a very good relationship with him, then it's okay. If you have a relationship like Jesus had with James, Peter and John, Jesus could give them money and they would take it. I would gladly give money with those to whom I have a very close relationship, freely.

But if you don't have a close relationship with the person, and you see a person struggling in poverty, you go and give him money to help him in his poverty, he will think, oh this person, and there will be an unnatural relationship there. Then the best thing, if you see some poor brother or sister, the best thing is, put it in an envelope with his name, and put it in the offering box. But even better than that, would be to go to the elders and say, here is a person, I'm talking about financial need, I'm not talking about gifts.

For example, you want to give a gift to somebody. That's different. You can give a gift even to a rich person.

There's nothing wrong in that. You give birthday gifts or any other type of gift just out of friendship. There's a gift of friendship which is different from gifts given to someone because of poverty.

What I'm saying has nothing to do with gifts of friendship. That you can give to anybody, anytime, freely. But gifts to help people in their poverty, that's different.

There we have to not take away the dignity of that poor brother. He knows he's poor. And he doesn't want to be treated like a beggar.

So to protect his dignity, we must do it in a dignified way. And you can go to the elders and say, Dear brother, I think this person, his family is struggling. Do you think we could help him? And it's much better that the church gives that person something.

Or you could give it to the elders and say, if you think that person could be given some money, give it. I'll tell you why. Because I've seen in the past that many people who are very, very poor, they tend to make

their needs known.

And those who cry the loudest get more money. And others who are more dignified and say, No, I won't tell anybody, they don't get anything. But the elders will know who is needy.

So if you give it to the elders, you make sure that the needy person gets it. And those who are not so needy don't get so much. So it's always wise to give to the elders.

It says in Acts chapter 4 that the early disciples gave the money to the apostles. And they distributed according to the needs. That is, they were humble enough to say, we don't have wisdom which person has more need and which person has less.

So they humbled themselves and gave it to the apostles. You read that in Acts chapter 4. So that is my recommendation always. Okay, another question is concerning, is it right to tell a facilitator in a weekday meeting or anyone who preaches in the church that the meeting is heavy, it's not edifying, or it's just condemning me or making me feel discouraged.

You know, you could always write a note. If there is no suggestion box, put it in the offering box. Address it to one of the elders.

Brother, could you please... I think it's boring. Whenever this person speaks, it's boring. Now if you write your name, they are more likely to take it seriously.

If you don't write your name, they may think this is just some visitor who is a critic and they probably throw it in the trash can. I never care for anonymous letters. Anonymous letters I throw in the trash can.

But if a person writes their name, I'd say, hey, particularly in a matter like this, it is true, some people's message is boring. I've heard many people tell me from other churches, this is boring, brother, I don't get anything out of it. Then at least I can tell them, brother, if you are boring, speak for five minutes.

Don't speak longer than that. Because sometimes people don't know. They think, they've got high thoughts about themselves.

There's nothing wrong in making it clear to one of the elders whom you have confidence in. You say, this is heavy, we're not getting particularly in the weekday meetings. I don't know how it's going in the different weekday fellowships.

If the whole meeting is boring, I think you should definitely tell the elders about it, so that they can know and do something about it or make some other person the facilitator in that meeting. But keeping quiet, you're not blessing the body of Christ. Somebody must be bold enough to express it.

Go to one of the elders, they're not going to eat you up, they will not get upset with you. That is not an unspiritual thing, it's a very important thing. See, when a husband and wife have a good relationship, a really good relationship, would a husband be afraid to tell his wife, there's something wrong with the food today.

Is it spoiled? Is it old? What's wrong in saying that? Or, this meat is spoiled. Or, there was not enough salt today. If you don't have a good relationship, your wife don't say such things.

I don't want to create further problems. But, if you have a good relationship, I think all of you can be free to tell the elders that. Another question is, what does it mean to hear by faith? To hear by faith means, you don't just listen to Brother Zach, you try to listen to God speaking through anyone who is speaking here.

Lord, what are you saying to me? That's where faith comes, by hearing the word of Christ. The word of Christ may come through a man, but you must go beyond the man, even go beyond the Bible, to Jesus. You read what Paul has written there, but beyond that I go to the Holy Spirit telling me something.

That's how I have faith. You must pray for that. Is it possible for one who has been baptized in the Holy Spirit to become legalistic? Sure.

Legalism means going according to the letter. For example, do you know that Rahab told a lie when she hid the Israelite spies? You read in the book of Joshua. They read the first two chapters there.

She hid the spies, and when the people of Jericho came, she said, oh, they went out that way. It was a lie. But she did it with a good motive to protect those people from being killed.

And there are godly men, if you read this book called The Hiding Place, you'll find the father of Corita and Boom hid the Jews when the Germans wanted to come and kill them, hid them in the house, and he said, no, they're not here. So, if you read in James 2 and Hebrews 11, you find Rahab is commended, appreciated by God for protecting the spies. You say, does God appreciate a lie? I learned something from that.

Like it says in 1 Corinthians 4 verse 5, God will finally judge the motive with which you say something. Now, if you say, ah, that's exactly the message I was waiting for. Now I can tell lies in different situations.

You can do that, and you will be judged in the final day because a lie is the first sin mentioned in the Bible. Satan told a lie in Revelation 22. Lie is the last sin mentioned in the Bible.

Remember this. The first and last sin mentioned in the Bible is lying. So, lying is a very serious sin.

But, when the motive is to protect someone or some very good motive that God sees, you'll find, that's where a person can be legalistic. It's an example of legalism where you judge someone for something. Hey, your sister, you didn't cover your head fully.

You covered it only up to here. That's legalism. Or, why are you wearing ornaments? Hey, she didn't buy it with your money.

Why are you worried? So, things like this, you know, you can be very legalistic. I met a lot of very godly women who wear jewelry, and I met a lot of ungodly women who don't wear jewelry. So, I'm not saying, my wife and I have never worn any jewelry any time.

We don't believe in that. But, that's a personal conviction. But, we don't judge other people who do.

You know, if you feel that that's the way it should be, that's fine. But, we believe that's the standard of Scripture for us. But, each person must go by their own conviction.

So, these are little areas where we can be legalistic. There are many, many things like the way you take the letter of the law, and even if you are baptized in the Holy Spirit, you can be like that because you are not listening to the Holy Spirit. If you are once filled with the Holy Spirit, it doesn't mean you are filled

forever.

You can leak. If my roommate is a brother in the church, and I see that there is something wrong in his life, should I speak to him? I think you should speak to the elders about it. You can speak to him if you have a good relationship.

Otherwise, you should certainly speak to the elders. Is it okay to marry somebody from another church? If so, how should I go about the matter? If the person is born again, the only condition is you must marry believers. I don't say, many people here are married from non-CFC churches.

If they are born again believers, some of them may be better than some sisters in CFC churches, or some brothers in CFC churches. So, we have never insisted that you must marry from a CFC church. Make sure the view is, your spiritual view is identical.

There is more likelihood of that if it is from a CFC church, but not necessarily. There are some very fine godly men and women in other churches. Make sure that you make some inquiry concerning the type of person he or she is, so that you don't land up in a problem.

You must decide also, where you finally, which church you are going to go to. And you must find out what type of church that is, so that if you are going to go permanently for the rest of your life to that church, find out beforehand, do you want to be in that type of church for the rest of your life? Because I tell you, some churches, I would rather sit at home, than go to some churches called churches. I can get a lot more sitting at home, listening to some message on YouTube, than going to some of these dead churches, or some churches that are only interested in your money.

So make sure you find out before you marry that. But CFC elders will not hinder you from doing that. But when you are marrying somebody from another church, you cannot force the elders to conduct the marriage in CFC.

No. You have to give them freedom to say, go ahead and get married in that church. I mean, they may agree to it if conditions are different, but usually, if a person is going to join that church, I would say, get married in that church.

Don't get married here and go to that church. How can I, as a woman, protect myself from the opposite sex in my workplace and place of work? You have to, first of all, dress in a very modest way. If you dress like the other people in a very tempting way, then don't blame anybody but yourself if some man is attracted because of your tight-fitting clothes or you expose so much of your flesh.

Blame yourself. But if you are dressed in a modest way, completely different from the way all the other women are dressed in your school or college or hospital or place of work, they will automatically see that you are different. I am not saying that you should do this.

There is a Christian group in America where the women wear the head covering 24 hours, all the time, because they feel that that's what a woman should do. Such people, when they go to work, no man goes anywhere near them. They say, this is some crazy woman, I don't want to go anywhere near her.

Now, I am not saying you should do that, but what I am trying to say is the principle. They say, this person is a little more modest, doesn't like too much of friendliness with boys. You are protected automatically, your dress can protect you.

So, don't be afraid to be different. You will be protected, I will tell you that. That man will see that you are not the type of person who likes to flirt with anyone.

And if someone tries to be too friendly with you, be courteous, but don't be too friendly. See, lot of joking between men and women is what leads to sin. You must be a little restrained as a girl, and as a man also, don't go joking with the women in your office.

I always ask this question to men. Supposing when you are joking with this woman in your office, your wife walks in. Will you continue joking? Then you are okay.

But you suddenly stop. Then you know that you are doing something wrong. Ask yourself that question.

Will I joke with her if my wife is here? Then do it. There is nothing wrong in joking, but sometimes this joking can lead to unholy familiarity between men and women. In marriage, how should I take help from the elders? Ask for their advice.

And they will be glad to help you. Galatians 6.6 says that the one who is taught the word of God must share all material things with the one who teaches him. What it says there is that if somebody has blessed you spiritually, you must bless him financially.

I believe that is a principle. Jesus himself received gifts from people who he preached to. He had no objection.

You read that in Luke 8 verse 3. But Paul never took it. Because he wanted to be a testimony. And that is why our elders do not take money.

I mean if you are blessed by them. I tell people the greatest, I don't need money. To tell you quite honestly.

There was a time when my wife and I were very, very poor. But because of the investments that my dad left for me, I have been able to support myself through the years and they have done so well that we are well off today. We are not in any financial need.

So almost all our elders are like that. So they don't need money. You don't have to go and give them money.

None of us need it. But what you can do, what I tell people is if God brings my name to your mind sometime, pray for me and my wife that we will have the anointing of the Holy Spirit and we will be healthy as we travel around to different places in the world. That is the greatest thing you can do for us.

That is the way you can reward us. Not financially. If people are blaming me in my place of work, what should I do? Ask God to protect you, but preserve you in that job.

If there is something which they accuse you of for doing something which is wrong, you have got every right to go and tell the authorities and the management, I didn't do that. But if everybody is just being evil of you, just love them, bless them, and show them by your life that you are unaffected. Sometimes you can pray, Lord, help me to do some good to that person.

The Bible says, do good to those who do evil to you. So isn't it a good prayer to pray, Lord, that person has done some evil to me? Please give me some opportunity to help him in some way, or do some good

to him, so that he knows that I have nothing against him. It is a good prayer to pray.

How to experience the freshness of the Holy Spirit every day? By keeping a good conscience, and every opportunity to humble yourself, you humble yourself. If my parents are non-Christians, and they think I don't love them, the truth is I do love them, but they don't think so. What shall I do? Well, or some family members, how do I do this in situations when I visit them, etc.? I think you need wisdom.

Ultimately you must ask God, Lord, please help them to see that Jesus Christ has changed my life. Help them to see I am loving, I am humble. Never argue with them, never try to force them to believe what you believe.

Let your life shine like a light. That is the best way to witness to unconverted relatives. I have heard that I should be my brother's keeper, but sometimes I have gone and told him directly what was wrong with him, and that sort of backfired.

You need wisdom. You have probably heard me say that if you have never appreciated a brother, ever, don't correct him. Appreciation must be the blackboard on which you write and chalk the correction.

If you don't have the blackboard, you will be writing in the air. It doesn't accomplish anything. So before you try to correct someone, ask yourself two things.

Have I ever said anything good about him to him? Or you find nothing good in him, then something is wrong with you. There is something good in almost everybody. So, if you found something good in him, he is more likely to listen to you when you correct him.

And if you also are praying for him, that is the second thing. If people tell false stories about us, what you do is just forgive them and leave it in God's hands. I have heard hundreds of stories about me which people have said right from the time CFC started.

I just ignore it. I live before God's face. How to teach our children to pray and trust in the Lord? Primarily by your life.

If children see that dad and mom are God-fearing, and they take time to pray and read the Bible, that will speak to them more than you are telling them. I remember one of my sons telling me about a year ago, Dad, there is one thing I can never forget when I was a little boy. I would get up from my bed and I would come to the sitting room and I would see you sitting there with the Bible.

That every day. And that image has never gone out of my mind. All your preaching cannot be greater than images that are in the minds of your children of what they have seen you do or they see how you talk to their mother or their father, how you talk to each other, husband and wife.

That is the greatest way. What if I am not earning enough, can I still consider marriage? You need to definitely be able to support a family before you consider marriage and ask God for that and if necessary consult the elders as to what you should do. But you should not fool a girl saying that you can take care of her if you are not able to.

What if my parents are poor and I cannot afford to rent a house, should I still leave them? Leaving the parents is not primarily physical. It is more an emotional detachment. You can live in the same home and still not let your parents control you and your wife.

If you have another room in your house, you and your wife can still decide things together. Maybe you are living with your parents because you are so poor and you cannot afford rent. But I would say if you can afford a rent, even a small house is better to stay separately.

It is always the best. But some people cannot even afford that. That is fine.

God understands that. Many of our poor people in the villages like that. Then just make sure that you and your wife make decisions together.

You don't have to leave. But don't stay there just because your parents say, oh you must stay here. A lot of parents in India would say, you must stay here.

Not good advice. I would say even if you can afford a small house on rent, stay separately. How can I know the gift God has given me? You exercise whatever, like for example I told you to distribute this book.

You start witnessing like that, God will show you other gifts. I know what I used to do. I didn't have much money to buy books to give.

I had tracts. I used to buy tracts. I used to give them out to people.

That is how God led me to something more and something more. When God sees that you are willing to do a little thing for Him, and I remember when I was in many churches, I would just, in the conferences and all, I would volunteer to distribute the food. So I would be sitting on the floor, I would take a bucket of sambar and pour it out and help in serving or cleaning the toilets.

That's what I did. That's how I started serving the Lord. So if you do small things, God will show you something more and something more and something more.

He doesn't suddenly put you into this great ministry. Many people want that great ministry first. There are many people sitting here, for example.

You may like the clean jobs, like singing in the choir or doing something with electronics, but never once do you go and clean the toilets. Why can't you do that? You may be a very technical person. Can't technical people clean the toilets? So if you start with the small things, God will lead you to something higher.

But if you are not willing to do the small things, I believe all your life God will never lead you into a ministry He planned for you when you were born, but you never come to it. Because you are always looking for the big things. Regarding birthday gifts, is it okay to receive gifts from people in the church? Sure.

There is nothing wrong in receiving a birthday gift even if you are the richest man in the world. By all means, if somebody comes to give you a birthday gift, don't insult him by not taking it. Sometimes that can be an insult.

Kings and all will refuse to receive cheap gifts from somebody. I have been in some villages where some poor lady will come and give me some money, maybe 20 or 30 rupees. I always take it.

Always, always, always. So that that lady doesn't feel that's not enough money to give some preacher like Brother Zach. I say thank you so much.

God bless you. And then when she is not looking, I put it in the offering box. I am not going to touch a poor person's money because I don't have a need.

Why should I take it? But don't insult that person. Sometimes you insult a person by not receiving a gift. What does it mean that Jesus will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire? What is the fire? The fire is a picture of the Holy Spirit.

Just like water is a picture of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said to Nicodemus, you must be born of water and the Holy Spirit because water is a sort of external cleansing. Baptism in fire is internal cleansing.

You know when they pull the gold from the 10,000 feet below the ground, it's first covered with mud. They wash it all off with water and then they have to put it in the fire to purify all the other things which are not gold. That's how they get the gold.

Water cleansing first and then fire. So born of water and baptized in fire. Okay.

Someone has asked about John Piper's teaching that God is most glorified when I am most satisfied in him. I think that's absolutely right. When I am absolutely satisfied with God and say, Lord whom have I on earth but thee and nothing in heaven but thee and there is nothing on earth I decide beside thee, that is a true worshipper.

You are satisfied with God himself. You don't need anything else but him. That is the right attitude to have in our Christian life.

And from that flows all our service. Should I take care of my if I am a married man, should I take care of my relatives if they are well off? Even if my parents say take care of them. I would say that you must recognize that your money is God's and if your relatives are well off you don't have to support them, even if your parents say what you earn is for your own family, for your wife and your children.

That is the way God has ordained it. But if someone is poor and needy, then you can consider and always, you know, if you have a good relationship with your wife, pray about it. This is a question that comes up very often.

What if my relatives are in some other church, can I visit them? Or my parents go to another church, can I visit them? Sure, you should. I told you that you must honor your parents. Those things are understood.

See, just going to another church doesn't mean they are heathen. I mean, if they are Hindus, I would go and visit them. Sure.

Otherwise you will become a cult. If you say, oh, they go there. Oh, they have been put out of the church.

You can't go and visit them. No. These are two different things.

Maybe somebody is disciplined. And if you are a relative, now other believers may not need to go there and visit such people. But if you are a son or a daughter, of course you must see them.

But other relatives, it says in 1 Corinthians 5, that probably with somebody's discipline, it is better to avoid meeting them. That's my advice. But if you are a relative, if you are a son or a daughter, it is definitely different because you have another relationship with them.

Other believers have only a spiritual relationship with that person who is put out of the church. But you also have a physical relationship. And that physical relationship is not worth zero.

It has some value. So you must respect your parents. But others who have only a spiritual relationship, if somebody is disciplined in the church, I would avoid meeting them till they have repented and come back.

He who has years to hear can hear. Those who think that they know God better, you can do what you like. There are a number of questions about how in-laws interfere.

Please preserve your marriage relationship with your wife and don't let ever your parents interfere in that. Can we attend marriages and functions of relatives who are from non-Christian background? I never go to a temple or a mosque or churches which don't preach the new birth for a marriage. But I would go to the reception.

I would go to the reception. Even for my own brother's wedding, because he was not a believer, marrying an unbeliever, I said, if you have it in a court, I will come and support you. But if you have it in a church, I am sorry, I cannot support you.

But I did everything for the reception. So I will go for a reception, but not for the religious function. But I would say one thing, if people have left the church and you do meet them, don't talk about CFC matters there.

That's where you can fall into sin. Some questions about don't have any practical relationship to this. You can have theoretical questions about the Bible, which are unimportant.

Ask yourself whenever you ask a question, is this something that's going to help me today in my daily life? Those are the only things. What about, should a sister cover her head at home and sing song sessions and all? See, what is written about head covering is primarily for church meetings. So if something is a church meeting, you think it's a church meeting, you can do it.

Or in prayer, but it's not a law that you have to, for example, you are eating food around the table and you pray. It's not a law that a sister must cover her head when she gives thanks for the food. There are some questions which are asked by people who are not members of the church, but ask them marital questions about divorce and all.

If you are not a member of the church, we do not accept any responsibility to give you advice. Elders will not take that responsibility because it's in marriage matters. Because it's too important a matter.

It's those who are committed to the church whom we can So, those who are not committed, I mean we can give general advice, but we can't spend too much time with it. Regarding the leading of the Holy Spirit, see, I think I need to tell you one thing. A lot of people are confused between receiving the Holy Spirit and being filled with the Holy Spirit.

I've said this before. Romans 8, 9 says, if you don't have the Spirit of Christ, you are not even born again. When you ask Jesus to come into your heart, it is the Holy Spirit who comes in.

Jesus is in heaven. The Spirit of Christ, Romans 8, 9 comes into your heart. You have received the Holy Spirit.

In the early days they used to say, believe in the Lord Jesus receive the Holy Spirit. If you read the Bible, nowhere does anybody say to someone, accept Jesus into your heart. Not even once.

Ask Jesus to come into your heart. That verse is not in the Bible. Why do we say it today? They used to say, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ receive the Spirit.

Now the thing is, we live in a country where there are all types of spirits. You go to a Hindu man and tell him to receive the Spirit. What Spirit? So that's why I combine the two statements.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, receive the Holy Spirit. I say, receive the Lord Jesus Christ into your heart. It's just the same thing, really.

I'm combining two statements. And what does he receive? The Holy Spirit. If he's really born again, the Holy Spirit comes in.

I asked Jesus to come into my heart many times. I never knew whether he came or not. Till one day when I was 19 and a half, I read John 6, 37.

Him that comes to me I'll never cast out. And I believed. That's when faith came.

And I believe Christ has come in. Who came in? The Holy Spirit. I didn't know the theology of it but I received the Spirit that day.

But I wanted to be filled with the Holy Spirit. That was more. I'll prove that to you from Scripture.

Turn with me to John chapter 20. In John's Gospel chapter 20, on the day of the resurrection, Jesus did something. The last time Jesus did that was when he did it for Adam.

You know that Jesus did something for Adam in Genesis chapter 1? When it says, God breathed on Adam, that was Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus was there breathing on Adam and Adam became a living soul. And now in John chapter 20, after the resurrection, he came to his disciples and it says in verse 22, John 20, 22 he breathed on them.

This is the second time. First was in Genesis chapter 1 and 2. He breathed on Adam. That was the old creation.

Now he's breathing on these people. There's a new creation. And received the Holy Spirit.

Do you believe they received the Holy Spirit there? Sure. When God breathed on Adam, he became a living soul. When he breathed on them and said receive the Holy Spirit, they received the Holy Spirit.

But then he told them now wait until you are filled with the Holy Spirit. That happened on the day of Pentecost, which was 40 days later. So, there's a difference between being born again, being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Being born again is once, but being filled with the Holy Spirit is again and again and again. This matter of being committed to break bread. How can you decide whether someone is committed? Well, I'll tell you what.

When people came to John the Baptist to take baptism, he said let me see some fruit in your life. Fruit of repentance. Then I will baptize you.

We are following the same principle. Let me see some fruit in your life that you are really born again. Then we'll ask you to break bread.

Will we make a mistake? Sure. We may make a mistake with some people. We think they are born again.

They are not. But that's the reason why we ask for commitment. We must see some fruit.

By their fruits you shall know them, Jesus said. So, we look for the fruit so that we don't allow any Tom, Dick and Harry to just come and break bread. What about boys and girls being young men and women being in a relationship? I don't know if this word relationship has got many meanings.

Relationship can also mean that they sleep together. And if that's what you mean, what's wrong in it? There's everything wrong in it. Is it right to be in a relationship? So it depends what you mean by that word.

We have to keep a respectable distance. There must be avoid physical contact before marriage. And don't be in provocative situations.

If you go out late in the evening or at night you can be tempted. And I would say consult the elders about anyone whom you are considering for marriage because they may know things about that person which you don't know. If I'm getting married and the girl's parents want to give something I would say let the girl's parents no dowry, we don't believe in dowry, but you can't deny a girl's father for money to give I say put it in her account, in her name.

By all means. Put a hundred lakhs if you like, but in her account, in her name. Not in your name or your father's name.

And if they want to give you something let them give it to you after you get married. Not before. That will test your own covetousness as well.

What about sharing marriage expenses 50-50? That is ideal, but if you feel the other partner's parents are very poor you can lower it down and say pay as much as you like. Sometimes if someone from a rich family is marrying someone from a poor family we must be considerate. Or if one person is inviting 500 visitors and the other person is inviting 10 how can you divide the... It should be in that proportion that they divide the marriage expenses.

That is righteousness. How to know when I am ready to be baptized? The best thing is to ask the elders and they will tell you. One last question.

Why do churches decline? Why did it happen in Revelation chapter 2 and 3? Because the devil is always active to add hypocrites to the church. The best church in the world was Jesus' church which had 12 people and one of them was a hypocrite. One out of 12 means 8%.

The best church in the world had 8% hypocrites. So you can't have a pure church even Jesus did not have one. That is not any reflection on Christ.

The wonderful thing is he got exposed. I will tell you something I have seen in 43 years in CFC. If somebody sits here and he is not straight forward one day or the other he gets exposed.

Especially if he is proud. They get exposed. Sometimes people don't think of pride as a sin.

You know there are people I have disciplined people in this church for pride. I say you cannot come to this church anymore. Or I have told them not to come to any CFC church anywhere in the world.

Now many people think pride is not a sin. I say what if I tell you that this person was living in adultery every day for the last 5 years. Do you think he should be disciplined then? You think adultery is worse than pride? Do you know what the chief angel did to become the devil? It was not adultery.

You know how the highest angel became the devil? Not by murder. By pride. The fundamental problem with a lot of people even in CFC is they don't see pride as worse than adultery and worse than murder.

If somebody committed murder every week you would say oh definitely we don't want him in the church. But if someone is proud and arrogant what is there brother that is nature? Brother you got to know God. Leave it to the elders.

Sometimes they judge the elders for discipline. I know people I have put out of the church there are some older people who tried to bring them back to the meeting here once when I was not here. What arrogance! They don't know why somebody is disciplined.

Very often you don't know why an elder disciplines someone. They don't advertise it to protect that person's dignity. But elders have a very good reason for disciplining.

I have got a very good reason if I have disciplined anybody and I can stand before God and answer for that. And I believe pride is the number one sin to be worse than I have met CFC people who have committed adultery. I did not put them out of the church.

You know what I did? I said don't break bread. You repented. You told me the truth.

Don't break bread for one year. Don't tell anybody why you are not breaking bread. Don't tell anybody.

Confess it. Repent before God. But if they are proud, I will tell you what.

God resists the proud and I resist the proud. And I hope every elder will resist the proud. God does not resist the adulterer or the murderer.

Jesus forgave the murderer on the cross. He forgave the adulterous woman. I will forgive the adulterous person.

I will forgive the murderer. But I will resist the proud till the end of my life because that's God's nature. If people don't understand it, too bad for them.

So that's how we go forward in the church and when people don't, churches which don't appreciate those values, gradually they will decline. So that's just a I think we have covered a number of areas but I trust it's been a help to everyone. Once again let me remind you please get a copy of this and give it out to some friends.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, please help us to absorb so much that we have heard today that it will bring some lasting fruit in our lives. I pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/qtsr6LOm5xk.mp4>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/questions-about-family-life-and-the-church/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net