

Seek For Fellowship With Your Family And Your Church

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking various aspects in the Christian walk, such as being filled with the Holy Spirit, having a heavenly mindset, seeking life over knowledge, following Jesus' example, humility, and walking the narrow way. It stresses the significance of being part of a local church for fellowship and spiritual growth, highlighting the need for genuine connection with God and others to build a strong foundation for ministry and family life.

Scripture: 1 John 1:3, Ephesians 4:22, Jeremiah 17:9, Revelation 3:16, Matthew 7:13, Genesis 3:1, 1 Timothy 3:4, Colossians 3:12, Psalm 133:1, Proverbs 22:6

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Community in Christ"

Description

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Transcript

There are a number of things that we have thought about during this conference. We've been thinking of just to review what we did. I titled this theme for this conference as what we should seek for.

Number one, seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit. That's the first session. Then we thought about seek to be a heavenly minded person.

The first man is the second man is heavenly. Then we spoke about seek for life and not for knowledge. You remember the two trees in the Garden of Eden.

Then we spoke seek to follow Jesus example. Look for the glory of Jesus in the scriptures and seek to follow his example. And then today in our fifth session we spoke about seek for the humility of Jesus.

And then in our last session we spoke about seek for the narrow way always. That's the Sermon on the Mount way. And now I want to speak finally on seek to be a part of a good local church.

Seek for fellowship. Ultimately God's purpose. See all these things that we said so far could be very individualistic.

I seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit myself. I seek to be a heavenly minded person myself. I seek for life and not knowledge myself.

I seek to follow Jesus example myself. I seek for the humility of Jesus myself. And I seek to walk the narrow way myself.

Good. But that should all build up finally to the place where I join with other people who are also going this way and be built together with them in fellowship. And that is where my holiness is tested.

That's where my humility is tested. That's where my love is tested. This was not possible in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament people were a congregation. There were two million people in the wilderness. They were not connected to each other.

There's a big congregation. You know in Ezekiel chapter 37. Turn with me for a moment.

Ezekiel 37. There's a beautiful picture there. There's a little booklet which some of you have read called The Congregation, The Club, and The Church.

It's only 32 pages. If you don't have it you can order it from Melbourne. It's a little booklet.

Only 32 pages. But it shows us the difference between what is the gathering which is a congregation, what is a club and what's a church. And I want to show you a little picture of that in Ezekiel 37.

Congregation, club, church. Okay. The Spirit of the Lord, verse 1, brought me into a valley and it was full of bones.

And he caused me to pass among these bones round about and they were all very dry. And Son of Man, the Lord asked me, can these bones live? And he said, Lord, I don't know. You know.

Anyway, prophesy over these bones and pay to them dry bones. Hear the word of the Lord. Behold, I will cause breath of my Holy Spirit to enter into you that you may come to life.

And I'll put sinews on you and make them grow back on you, cover you with skin and breath that you may come alive. So I prophesied, verse 7, as I was commanded and there was a noise and a rattling and the bones came together and bone to bone and looked and behold sinews were on them and flesh grew and skin covered them but there was no breath in them. Then the Lord said to me, one more stage, prophesy to the Holy Spirit.

Prophesy and say, come upon these dead, lifeless beings. And I prophesied and the breath came into them, verse 10, and suddenly they came to life and stood on their feet and exceeding they gave unto me. Notice three pictures here.

First of all, a bunch of bones. They were all real human bones, not bones of animals. Human bones but not connected to each other, all lying together in one area.

We could say in a broad way that's a picture of a congregation, a huge group of people, like two million people in the wilderness. There's a lot of potential but not connected. The next stage is where these bones get flesh on top of it and they get connected.

It's not just bones. It looks like a body because it's all connected now. You see that but they're like dead bodies and there's no difference between a dead body and a pile of bones.

A dead body becomes a pile of bones after some time. Absolutely, both are worthless. A dead body can do nothing, pile of bones can do nothing.

But it looks better than a pile of bones. There's a connection between the wrist and the hands and all that and looks like a real body but it's dead. This is a picture of a club where they care for one another and help one another but there is no connection with the head and the Holy Spirit is not there.

The fullness of the Holy Spirit is not there. And the third one is the Spirit of God comes and fills them and they come alive. You have to see when you go to a church.

Is this a congregation where people live their own individual life, not working together? They all come, 10,000 people sit in a church, listen to the sermon and go home. Good, maybe a good sermon. It's like a pile of bones, they're not connected with each other.

And then you go to another place where they care for one another, they help one another. And this looks much better. It is because they help each other.

Somebody's in need, somebody's sick, they take some food to their house and somebody's in financial need, they help them. It's a club. You know the Freemasons? There's a group called the Freemasons who don't trust in God.

They're very good, helpful to each other. There are Hindu and other clubs that help and care for one another. Very good club.

There are many clubs where they come to play cards or tennis together and they help one another. If anybody's in need, they rally to help them. But they have no connection with Jesus.

There's no Holy Spirit there. Congregation, club, and here's the church. The Holy Spirit comes and fills them and they're suddenly an army working together.

The wonderful thing about any army, verse 10, last part, is that they have a general who tells them what to do. And each soldier is working with the other soldier together to accomplish a purpose, to win the battle for their nation. Like the human body under the control of the head.

That's what a church is supposed to be. There must be a connection with the head first, like the two arms of the cross, and also with each other. So there is a concern for each other, helping one another, caring for another, all good.

But if each person in that church is not directly connected to the head and walking the narrow way, seeking fellowship with the head, it's not a church. It's a good club. And you may not, if you know something about the New Covenant Church, you will not mistake a congregation for that church.

You'll not see a big mega church and say, boy, this is the body of Christ. No, you won't be fooled. There may be powerful sermons there.

If you want to listen to a powerful sermon and good music nowadays, you don't have to go to a church. You go to YouTube. There's a lot of Christian music there, if you search for it, which is much better than any music you hear in most churches.

And there are a lot more good sermons on the YouTube with some very good preachers than you can hear in any church. I guarantee that in YouTube, you can hear a better sermon than what you listen in any churches today. Better than 99% of churches.

But you know, I'll tell you, and you have an advantage in YouTube. If you get bored with a sermon, you can just switch it off and go. In a church, you can't get up and walk out.

It's a bit insulting. So if you're only interested in a good sermon, I'd say go to YouTube. Don't go to a church.

You can hear much better sermons, or you can turn it off when you don't like it. And the wonderful thing about YouTube is they don't pass an offering bag around after you listen. I mean, there are many Christian websites that say pay \$5 per sermon, believe it or not.

I mean, CFC charges nothing, because we're not, like Jesus charged nothing. Paul charged nothing for his sermons. We charge nothing.

We have no, take no royalties on our books. We charge nothing for our sermons. We try to do exactly like Jesus and Paul did when it comes to money.

We never ask for money. We never send out letters. We never charge for royalty, nothing.

But most churches, I'll tell you something I heard the other day. Somebody wrote to me, Brother Zach, I'm so thankful to CFC, everything is free. The other day, I found another site which said, listen freely to the sermon.

And I tuned in, it was free. But after I listened to it for about five minutes, they stopped and said, if you want to continue listening, please pay \$5. That is a clever trick.

It's like catching the fish with the hook. I tell you, preachers are such sharp businessmen. They try so many tricks to make money.

I was most amused. I never heard such a trick. There are some very clever people among preachers when it comes to money.

And you know where they get that cleverness from? You know, the Bible says in Genesis 3.1, the serpent was the cleverest of all the animals. And so the devil got into the serpent. Why didn't he get into the donkey? Why didn't the serpent get into a donkey and come to Adam like that? For the donkey is a bit dumb.

So the devil is looking for clever people to use their cleverness to lead people astray. Go to a church that encourages you to have a direct connection with Christ. And the only way to have that is by denying yourself and dying to yourself and your personal choices every day.

We answered a little question about modesty a little earlier. What is the dress code? Modesty. Don't go by your own idea.

You can have your own idea and you can be very stubborn. No, I think that my dress is modest. Okay, okay.

Go ahead, wear it till Jesus comes. You may get a surprise when he comes and he tells you your dress was not modest. So don't be so stubborn in your opinion in any area.

Say, Lord, I'm human. My flesh deceives me all the time. The Bible speaks about the deceitful lusts.

Satan is a deceiver. The Bible says that in Revelation 12. The heart is deceitful above all things, it says in Jeremiah 17.

My lusts are deceitful, it says in Ephesians 4. What all are deceitful? Satan, my heart, and the flesh. I cannot trust these things. Your heart may say something is right and it's not right.

Most immodestly dressed women, their heart tells them you're okay. And a lot of so-called Christian women also, who hearts are deceitful, you got to acknowledge I'm deceitful. Or some other thing that you do, which is wrong and your heart says, no, it's okay.

You fight with somebody about some earthly thing. And the Bible says we don't wrestle with flesh and blood. We are not supposed to wrestle with flesh and blood.

We have to fight with the devil, not with human beings. So there are many areas we can be deceived. So if we have a connection with the head and keep our conscience clear all the time, we can have fellowship with God.

And then I can have fellowship with another brother who also has fellowship with God. But if he doesn't have fellowship with God, even if I'm together with him every day, I don't have fellowship. Let me give you an example of what fellowship is.

Turn to 1 John. In 1 John, it speaks about fellowship with the Father and fellowship with one another, like the two arms of the cross. And remember, John is speaking at the age of 95, and he walked with God for 65 years, and he sees the corruption of Christianity around him.

And if you want to know how bad Christianity was in the end of John's life, just read Revelation chapter 2 and chapter 3. Those five of those churches were so backslidden that the Lord says, I'm going to spit you out of my mouth, he tells one church. So bad. Churches that were once planted by the apostles.

And John is concerned about them, and what is the message he gives them? He said, hey, fellas, I saw one life in my 65 years ago on this earth. There was a man who walked called Jesus Christ. I saw the life of God in him.

He was the Son of God. We touched it. We saw with our eyes, verse 1. We heard.

And he came to bring us in fellowship with the Father and to bring us in fellowship with all of you, verse 3. See the two words, fellowship with the Father and fellowship with each of us among ourselves. That is the two arms of the cross. That is the church, where there's fellowship with God and fellowship with one another.

You know, like the bones have come together, flesh has come. It doesn't stop there. But the Holy Spirit has come and they started working together.

It's not a dead man. See, like you see a person playing the piano, a good pianist. His ten fingers are working.

His eyes are looking at the musical score in front of him. His two legs are pressing the pedals. Look at the number of parts of his body working.

Ten fingers, two eyes. His ears are listening. Very often he has a earphone listening also.

And two legs pressing the pedals. So many parts of the body, all working in such split-second timing. A good pianist.

You wonder, how is this? I'll tell you how. Because all those ten fingers are connected to the brain. The eyes are connected to the brain.

The ears are connected to the brain. The two feet are connected to the brain. And the brain controls it in such split-second timing, it goes perfectly.

It's not because these ten fingers are always hanging around together. This is called, you know, spend time together. Not because of that.

Because if this hand is paralyzed, connection of the head is broken. Even if you hold it together, it will not be able to play the piano with you. Spending time together is, I want to spend time with this brother.

I spend time with this sister. That's not fellowship. That's friendship.

This is friendship. Always hang around together. Hang around together.

But this hand is paralyzed. How will you play anything? How do these hands come to fellowship? Not by hanging around together with some sister or brother. By that person and you being connected to the head.

I've sometimes met in a conference a brother whom I haven't met for one year. Immediately, we are in perfect fellowship. More than some people I'm seeing every day in my local church for a whole year.

I can't fellowship with them. Why is that? Because those guys are paralyzed. They're not connected to the head.

They're not living according to their conscience. And this other brother whom I saw after one year, he's living in a clear conscience. The moment I see him, I'm in fellowship with him.

I can play together with him. So, remember this. It's not just hanging out together every Sunday and meeting together and visiting one another.

It won't solve the problem. That's a club. If each person is connected to the head, this hand, this hand, every finger, leg, ears, eyes, then we work together perfectly.

That's the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit came on those dead bones and flesh and life came in. The Holy Spirit connects us to the head Christ.

They could not have this in the Old Testament. So, seek for this fellowship and to be built together in a local body of Christ. That's what I've spent the last 43 years, 44 years doing.

I said, Lord, I don't want to spend my life building congregations of people hanging around together where some people are not connected to the head, are paralyzed. You have to hold them up, hold them up. Think if this hand is paralyzed.

I have to make this hand hold it up. If I leave it, it will drop dead. It's got no life in it.

What's the solution? Always keep holding it up. I don't want to keep on holding up a brother like this who has no connection with it. I said, brother, confess your sin and repent and set your conscience right and get connected to the head.

It's not difficult. The only reason connection with the head is broken is because we don't keep our conscience clear. That's all.

Why can't you keep your conscience clear and be connected to the head? Then we'll have fellowship even if we don't meet each other for one year or five years. If you walk with God for five years and I walk with God for five years and we have not met each other, the moment we meet, we'll have glorious fellowship because each is connected to the head. It's not seeing each other that matters.

Seek for fellowship with God first, the vertical arm of the cross, then the horizontal. That's the thing that's emphasized in that book, The Congregation, The Club, and The Church. I'd encourage all of you to read it.

It won't take you more than a couple of hours to read that book. Take time to read it. I find that many people don't have a good habit of reading.

We have such a lot of good books in our churches and people don't spend their time to read it. I remember when I was a young Christian, it was very difficult for me to find out, is this a good book? I'd go to a Christian bookshop and I'd say, it's a pile of books. I don't know which is good, which is bad.

One reason I've written these different books, there are 30 books I've written and Annie's written three or four, is because we wanted to share with people all the things that we have learned. I didn't learn it all from, I learned many of it from others who helped me through the years in my younger days. So, it's like taking the good of all that we learned and putting the best of it together to pass it on to others.

That's what we've done in our books, so that you don't have to go through the 1,000 books in a bookshop and say, which one shall I select now? This one, this one, this one, they cost so much money. I say we put it all together and in a simple way, you can take these books a little at a time, whether it's your overcoming failure, there's a book called Purpose of Failure, you know, wondering how to have a good home, there's a book called A Heavenly Home, a little booklet, how to have victory, there's a book called Secrets of Victory, there's a book about the body of Christ, many, many things like this. And I want to encourage you, I had a good habit when I was young of reading at least one new book every month.

That's not a very difficult thing to do. It just needs 15-20 minutes a day. I want to read one new book every month.

You have 30 days in most months. It's very easy. Some good book I can finish and I've learned something.

Then I go to another book. And these books are so cheap. We spend so much time on our physical food.

Develop the habit of reading and studying scripture, all of you. And even if you're working, you know that there are many sisters I know who have a headphone while they're cooking and they're listening to my messages. Two things at the same time, it can work.

And they get such a lot. And they travel in the car, they put a CD in and listen. I remember one brother wrote to me saying, Brother Zach, you don't know, I've never met you, never met me, but you've traveled with me in my car every day when I go to work.

And you've come back with me when I come back from work. I've heard people tell me that, Brother, I finished the entire through the Bible in 35 trips to my office. 35 hours this way, 35 hours this way.

In one and a half months, I finished your entire through the Bible. And where did he waste time? He was driving. Of course, he couldn't get every word when you're driving, but he got most of it.

And then you hear it a second time, it comes back again. If you want to do it, there's time you can find it. Look at these boys and girls who suddenly fall in love with each other.

They're so busy, but how do they find time to be together? When they're in love with each other, love finds a way to find time. Or this mother who suddenly who says she didn't have time to read the Bible. One day a child gets sick and is hospitalized.

All of a sudden she finds time to go and spend time with a child in hospital. Where did that come from? This mother who said she had no time to read the Bible. How did she suddenly find hours to spend with a child in hospital? It's all a silly excuse to say I don't have time.

We have time for what we feel is important in our life. We don't have time for what we feel is unimportant. Seek for fellowship with God.

Which is the most important thing in life. Keep your conscience clear. Read God's word and say, Lord, I want to develop my fellowship with you intimately.

I want to know you like a bride who's in love with her bridegroom. Waiting for the bridegroom to come back so that we can get married. I want to love you like that.

That's how I lived with Jesus in my younger days. And I want to live with Jesus even now. When I get up in my bed in the morning, I say, Lord, you're my bridegroom.

I want to live with you. I want to love you like I loved you 60 years ago when I was born again. Till the end of my life.

And one day I'll see you face to face. My life with Jesus is exciting. Exciting because I'm in love with him.

He's my bridegroom and I'm fervently looking forward, like the song of Solomon says, for my bridegroom to come. You live like that with the Lord. Your life will be exciting.

Your life will be overcoming. You won't be drawn away by the temptations of the world. And you have no problem switching out the TV set for wasting time watching a lot of rubbish they have there.

And you watch only the good things. And your children will see that dad and mom watch only what is good. And they turn it off when something is not good.

And your children will grow up to value things because they see you value those things. And you'll find your conversation with your husband and wife become more pleasant and loving at home. And your children grow up watching that.

And they'll grow up one day and say, I want to have a home like my dad and mom had at home. What a wonderful way to bring up our children. There's so much evil in the world today that if we don't train our children at home, we're going to lose them.

And I want to tell you, the richer you are, the richer country you live in, there are more dangers for your children when they grow up. They are more taken up with their gadgets than with each other. Young people today have hardly any time for conversation and fellowship.

They're always on their phone all the time. They have their Bibles on their phone, some of them, but they don't go to that. They're texting.

And this horrible thing called Facebook, which so many people tell each other what they cooked for lunch today and what they're planning to eat for dinner tomorrow and where they went. And a lot of it is just boasting. Now, this is what I did.

And that's what I make poor other people who can't do those things feel sad. I traveled here. I traveled there.

Oh, what a scenery that was. And that poor person watching yours was one of your friends on Facebook. He can't afford to go outside his own village or town.

How have you helped him spiritually? You just made him jealous of you by your boasting about where all you went and pictures of your scenery of this. You think Jesus would ever do something like that? You think Jesus would make other people feel bad that they can't have what you have? Or can't eat the type of food you can cook in your home? Or can't travel to the places you can travel to? What type of Christian is that? I don't have a Facebook account. I never will.

Somebody has put a fan page with Zach Coonan and Annie Coonan. I don't know who did it. I still haven't found out who it is.

If I find out who it is, I'll tell them to take it down. I don't want it. But at least I heard that they put only some messages and all.

Some people replied to that, hey, brother Zach, they don't even know that's not my page. I don't know who's put it up there. I don't believe in that.

I don't believe in telling people where I went or what wonderful sights I saw. I can tell people what wonderful brothers I met who love the Lord. But that's not exciting thing to write on Facebook.

Or how somebody denied themselves to follow Jesus. Where do you read such things? No, brothers and sisters, we have to be careful how we spend our time. There are people who have time for Facebook who have no time for God's book.

Sad. Where do you build a church like that? And if you have such habits in your life, I tell you, you're paving the way to destroy your children and lose them one day. And one day when they are lost, you will weep and cry, oh, brother, please pray for my children.

Well, you're the one who led them astray. You didn't have time for them. Like this 19-year-old girl who, Christian, her mother said, hey, can I have some time with you? And the mother and daughter.

And she said, mom, when I was five years old and I came to you and wanted to talk to you, you said, hey, go away. I don't have time now. Now I say to you, I don't have time for you.

You don't have time for your five-year-old because you're busy with something. Your work or you're making money. Don't be surprised if then that girl grows up to be 19, tells you, mom, I don't have time for you.

Sorry. Or your son. You fathers, if you don't have time for your little boys to go hug them, take them out on a date, on a little picnic all by yourself with them, you don't have time for that.

You're busy making money. Don't be surprised if one day they drift away from you and say, dad, I have no time to listen to you. You had no time for me when I was five years old.

You were busy with your things. You're not interested in the things I was interested in. Why should I be interested in what you're trying to tell me now? Parents are losing their children because they don't have time for them.

They're busy with a whole lot of other things to earn your living and to your work is essential. That I agree. You need to sometimes get to work long hours, but in the midst of it all, I'm sure you can find time for your children.

Do you hug them? Why do you hug only your little six-month-old baby? What about your 15-year-old son? Do you ever hug him? Or your 15-year-old daughter? They need your hugs as well. Sure. We must show them that we love them with a physical touch.

Don't hug other people's children. Hug your own. Very, very important.

My sons are more than 40 years old. I hug all of them even now, and I never stop. The physical touch is so important.

You husbands and wives, do you hug each other and tell each other that you really love each other? Or do you say tender words only at the beginning? Family life is being attacked by the devil. Build it up. The church consists of foundation is our assurance that God loves us perfectly.

The ground floor of the first story is our personal walk with God and our conscience. The second story is our family life, relationship with wife and children. The top story is the church.

You can't build a church if you don't have the foundation of God loves you perfectly, if you don't have that first story of a walk with God with a clear conscience, and the second story of building your family, your relationship with your wife and children. Then think of church and ministry. That's the reason why so many churches are not being built as a body of Christ.

I started preaching about 60 years ago, and when I got married, and we had children, I said, Lord, if my children go astray, I'll stop preaching. The Bible says, if you can't bring up your four sons in a proper way, where are you going to teach other people to, 100 people to live properly? The Lord says, four sons I gave you, and you couldn't bring them up in a proper way to follow me? You're trying to preach to 100 people. Just forget it.

That's written in 1 Timothy chapter 2. So I told the Lord, I respect your word, and you know when you need to start that? When that child is one year old, start talking to him, fellowshiping with him, and as he grows up, that fellowship will remain. I remember my wife used to talk to my children every day when they came back from school. She gave up her profession as a doctor only to be with the children.

Okay, she didn't make the thousands of rupees she could make as a doctor, but we have four children who are wholeheartedly following the Lord today. Which is better? Four million dollars or four sons who follow the Lord? I have no doubt in my mind which is heavier. I hope you will have no regret when your children are grown up, and you sit back, oh, I wish I'd spent more time when they were young.

Now is the time to think about that, my brothers and sisters. When your children are small, spend time with them. Cut down some of that unimportant work.

Even cut out some church meeting if needed, because you say, I've spent time with my family. Build the church. Seek to build fellowship with your family, with your wife.

The devil is attacking fellowship between husbands and wives. Don't neglect your wife. Don't ignore fellowship with your wife or fellowship with your children.

Take time to say nice words, and don't overcome your temper, and discipline your children, and seek to spend time with them. They are precious gifts God has given us to bring up for his glory, and thus we shall build a church. God bless you all.

Thank you for listening to me patiently in all these seven sessions.

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