

# Seeking God With All Our Heart

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen emphasizes the necessity of seeking God with all our heart, prioritizing our love for Him above worldly distractions and understanding the importance of His discipline in our lives.*

**Duration:** 58:58

**Scripture:** Exodus 23:10-11, 2 Chronicles 36:20-21, Jeremiah 23:16, Jeremiah 29:12, Matthew 22:37

**Topics:** "Seeking God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker encourages the audience to reflect on their lives and identify where they may have gone astray from following God. He emphasizes the importance of prioritizing the Lord and making a covenant with Him to discipline oneself if any other love or distraction starts to take precedence. The speaker reminds the audience that God's plans are always for their welfare and good, as stated in Jeremiah 29:11. He warns against allowing covetousness, greed, and worldly desires to rob them of time with God. The sermon concludes with a challenge for the audience to respond to God's plans for their lives and to seek Him in prayer.

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## Transcript

Let's turn to Jeremiah and chapter 29. Here the Lord warns the people of Israel, just like Jesus warned us in Jeremiah 29, verse 8 and 9. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, do not let your prophets who are in your midst and your diviners deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream. For they prophesy falsely to you in my name.

I have not sent them, declares the Lord. The prophets, the false prophets in those days told Israel that they should not go to Babylon. But Jeremiah said, God wants you to go, because He needs to discipline you, and when the period of discipline is over, He will bring you back.

Verse 10, when seventy years have been completed in Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill my good word to you to bring you back to this place. False prophets never believe in discipline. They don't believe that the Lord needs to discipline anybody.

They always tell us, you're okay, nothing's wrong with you. In the Old Testament they said that, and in the New Testament they say that. Whereas the true prophets always say, you need to be disciplined.

But God won't let you suffer. He's not going to let you be disciplined forever. He's going to bring you back.

And He says in verse 11, I know the plans that I have for you, plans for welfare, not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope. The man of faith always believes, no matter what happens, no matter what he cannot explain, no matter what he cannot understand, he always says, God's plans for me are for my best. Maybe you're going through a difficult time and you say, well, I don't understand why I'm going through this difficult time, but I'm willing to go through it because ultimately I know that God's plans are for my good.

So, when the children of Israel went into captivity in Babylon for 70 years, it was exactly like the Lord disciplining His children today. It was a discipline for their disobedience, for their sin. They had violated God's laws for many years and God waited a long, long time before He judged them.

And the Bible says that one reason why God sent the Israelites to Babylon for 70 years was because they had not kept the law of the seven-year Sabbath. You read that, I think it's in 2 Chronicles 36, where it says that they did not allow the land to keep its Sabbaths. Let me just see that verse.

In 2 Chronicles, it says about the captivity of the Israelites, in verse 20, those who survived were taken to Babylon as slaves. To the king and his sons under the kingdom of Persia conquered Babylon. Thus the word of the Lord, verse 21, spoken through Jeremiah, came true.

That the land must rest for 70 years to make up for the years when the people refused to observe the Sabbath. See, in the book of the law, one of the laws was that on the seventh day you must have a Sabbath. Another law was that you must plow your field and plant seeds and reap a harvest for six years.

And the seventh year, you must leave your land without plowing it, without sowing any seed. Give the land a Sabbath for one year. And the Lord said, if you're going to ask, well, what are we going to eat that year? The Lord said, in the sixth year, I'll bless you double so that, triple actually, that you'll have enough for the sixth year, you'll have enough for the seventh year, and you'll have enough for the eighth year.

So you can afford to leave the land without plowing it. But you know how greedy human beings are. You get all that in the sixth year, and the seventh year they again plow the land to get some more.

The craze to make more money and get more. It's what destroys people. It's what's destroyed Christians through the years.

It's what destroyed Israel. But the judgment didn't come immediately. For 490 years, they disobeyed that law.

They kept on plowing the field, making money, making money, making money, disobeying God, disobeying God. And they said, well, nothing happened. Nothing's happened for 400 years.

Nothing's happened for 450 years. I suppose, God, it doesn't matter. That's what a lot of Christians say when they disobey God's word.

They say, well, nothing's happened. I mean, we've disobeyed God for ten years. Nothing's happened.

But they disobeyed for 490 years, but then the judgment came. What was the judgment? How many years were they supposed to keep the land without plowing it? One year and seven. So for the 70 years which the land should have not been plowed, God took the Israelites away to Babylon and said, okay, the land's going to rest for 70 years.

God's going to make sure that what a man sows, he will reap. In the case of Israel, He treated Israel as a nation. So the whole nation was like that.

But in our case, God doesn't treat us as a nation. It's not our children and grandchildren that are going to reap the consequence of our sins. God treats us as individuals.

So my son won't reap the consequences of what I've done. I will reap it, whether good or bad. I mean, God may take a long time to act, but when He does act, it will be a fulfillment of His word.

So that's why they were taken in. The 70 years was a period of discipline. And Jeremiah kept saying, listen, fellas, humble yourself under that discipline.

Don't rebel against it. But the false prophets said, no, there's no discipline. You're okay, fellas.

There's nothing wrong. There's no need to go to Babylon. God said, you must go.

So that's why He said, be careful of the false prophets who talk about their dreams and always tell you that everything is all right with you. You don't need to be disciplined. You are perfectly okay.

You haven't gone astray. Now, for us, it's not keeping the land unplowed for one year. What was the basic reason why God gave the Sabbath or even the tithe? When God gave the people the Sabbath, the purpose was to teach them to put God first in their life.

That was the purpose. You know, when Adam was created, his first day was a Sabbath day because he was created on the sixth day and the next day was a Sabbath day. So that was his first day.

So he was taught, well, you must put me first and then go and do your work. Your work is secondary. Your earning your living is secondary.

I am to be first in your life. That's what God tried to teach Adam when He created him. And that's what He taught the Israelites.

Listen, you have worked for six days. Now keep the seventh day. You ploughed the field.

You've earned such a lot from your fields for six years. Give one year, rest. And what were they supposed to do that year? Well, I suppose they were supposed to use that year for a little more fellowship with God and worship and spiritual things.

And you'll find that this is where covetousness and greed and the spirit of the world coming into us, the thing that it always robs us of is time with God, giving God His due. And when the things of the world or greed or covetousness or entertainment or music or watching television or name it, there are 101 things today. When that robs you of giving God the place and the time that He should have in your life, that's exactly the same sin as the Israelites saying, we're going to work the seventh year too, we're going to plough the field, make some more money.

And one day it caught up with them. And one day it'll catch up with us. See, when does backsliding begin? Backsliding does not begin when we have really lost all contact with God and when we've stopped reading the Bible and we're discouraged and depressed and don't feel like coming to the meeting.

That's not the time backsliding begins. That's miles down the road of backsliding. If you want to know where backsliding begins, it's good to know what is the first deviation, because if you watch it there, you can discover it instead of discovering it years down the road.

And that we can see in 2 Corinthians 11. In 2 Corinthians 11, we read about how we can go astray. And this is something which we have spoken about often.

2 Corinthians 11 and verse 3. He says, I am afraid. Paul says, lest, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray. Led astray means, I fear that you'll start backsliding.

And what is the beginning of backsliding? That your minds are led astray from that simple devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. That's where backsliding begins. Where a heart that's fervently in love with Jesus Christ is no longer in love with the Lord.

You remember what the Lord told the church in Ephesus? We are very familiar with those words in Revelation 2, 4. You do lot of things, he told the leader in Ephesus, but you left your first love. When does backsliding begin in a marriage? It's not when they start hitting each other or yelling at each other. No.

When does backsliding begin? It's not when the wife says, I'm not going to cook your breakfast today. Go and cook it yourself. That's many miles down the road.

Backsliding begins in a marriage when that fervent love that they had for one another, or that they should have had for one another when they got married, has started cooling off. And then they are not so eager to spend time with each other. They no longer joke and have fun with each other.

It's all serious conversation or perhaps no conversation. And you know that something is wrong and now down the road they may stop cooking breakfast and hit each other and yell at each other. That's all down the road.

But at this point the backsliding has begun. It's the same in our relationship with Jesus Christ. It's not when you stop reading the Bible and that's all miles down the road.

It's when we stop loving Jesus with all our heart, that fervent love relationship, that simple devotion to Christ that it says here. When that has gone, we still come to the meetings, maybe you still read the Bible, maybe you're still not committing any grievous sin, but backsliding has started. Because, remember this, my dear brothers and sisters, you know there is no command in the Bible which says you must read the Bible every day.

Nowhere. Let me release you from that bondage. There is no verse in the Bible which says you must spend fifteen minutes in prayer every day.

You can be released from that. It says pray always, by the way, not fifteen minutes every day. There's no verse in the New Testament which says you've got to give ten percent.

We're released from that also. It says you've got to give a hundred percent. And what does the Lord require? Jesus said, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your strength, with all your mind, spirit, soul and body.

That, that is what God requires. And if you don't do that, God says, what's the use of your going to the meetings? What's the use of showing your face there and marking attendance? What's the use even of

your reading the Bible? I want you to love me with all your heart. And when that is gone, you started backsliding.

And what is it that makes that backsliding? It is always some other thing. You've begun to love some other thing. You know, sometimes you hear in the world that man's lost interest in his wife because now he's interested in somebody else, maybe in the office.

In the Western world it's very common. You suddenly hear even some pastor ran off with his secretary and got married to her and divorced his wife. And it was a slow process where that love, you see, this love got replaced by something else.

You know, I have a feeling that God has designed our heart to love. There's no doubt about that. And you either love God or you're going to love something else.

It can't be empty. I don't believe there's a man on earth who's not loving anything. There are many alternatives to God.

You see, love is the, we love when a person, either he loves his wife or he loves somebody else. Maybe he loves his job. They used to talk in the old days about computer widows.

People who worked on computers, their wives became widows. Not really, but because they were so busy with their interesting computer work that they had no time for their wife. It happens even today.

A man's job can be his first love, not his wife. I tell you, that will destroy marriage any day. It's not a question of number of hours we work with.

You can love a person fervently and yet because of circumstances you may not be able to spend much time with them. For example, a person who is posted in some faraway place and he can't stay with his wife, he may be able to see his wife two months in a year, but he loves her fervently. It's not a question of amount of time.

It's a question of heart attitude. It's not even a question of amount of time you spend with the Lord every day. It's a question of heart attitude.

I know a lot of people I've met in my life, full time workers who have all night prayer meetings, who do not love the Lord with all their heart. So what if they go through a prayer meeting for four or five hours? It proves nothing. It's heart attitude that there is no one and nothing on earth I love more than Jesus Christ my Lord.

He is the beloved of my heart and my soul and no one will ever take His place. No job, no money, no person, nothing. And I'll tell you something, it's very, very difficult to preserve ourselves in that because we're always being tempted.

Like it says here, the devil with his craftiness, he knows that he cannot lead us astray into obvious sin. I mean, how many people here can the devil lead astray into obvious sin? Maybe 1%. I think 99% of us, it would be very difficult for the devil to lead us into obvious gross sin.

So he knows there is no use trying that. That may work with some other people, but won't work with these folk. So he's going to try and lead us astray into love of something else, which is not sinful.

And he says, that's enough. If I can get this fellow's heart with love of something else. And the clearest proof of this is the rich young ruler who came to Jesus.

His heart was not filled with love for adultery and theft. No. But his heart had to be filled with love for something.

It was filled with love for money. And that was enough. He missed the golden opportunity to, I think, to be an apostle.

That fellow could have been an apostle. I don't know what his name was. But he could have been an apostle.

Instead, he went after money. The Lord told him, listen, you give up this and follow me. It's the same word he said to Peter and Matthew, follow me.

Give up your fishing nets and follow me. And Peter said yes. The Lord told Matthew, give up all your account books and follow me.

He said yes. The Lord told the rich young ruler, give up your money and follow me. Same thing.

The fellow said no. Now, I don't know where he is today, whether in heaven or hell. But if you were to go to him and ask him, listen, you think you made a wrong decision that day? Do you think he'll have any doubt today? At that time he may have had some doubt.

Not today. Now, I want to tell you this also, my brothers and sisters. Our life on earth is very short.

One day we get into eternity. A hundred years from now, all of us will be gone from here if the Lord hasn't come. And then, I'd like to ask you, do you regret the decision you took when you decided to pursue something else? And the Lord called you to love Him with all your heart and you decided that something else was going to have priority in your life.

I give you my word, everyone sitting here who makes that decision today is going to regret it. I don't know whether you go to heaven or hell, but wherever you go, you're going to regret it, without a doubt. And the only people, a hundred years from now, who are going to say, I do not regret the decision I took, are the ones who are going to say right now, Lord, I'm going to make sure I love you with all my heart.

My job will not be my priority. Money will never be a priority in my life. It's been a battle.

I said that to the Lord forty-three years ago, and I think by the grace of God, He's kept me with that, that I refuse to make anything else a priority. God would be a priority. Don't make comfort and ease a priority.

Because I'll tell you what will happen. This happened to so many Christians. They made comfort and ease a priority.

Okay, it's not just that their life becomes useless, but a lot of them have got into debt because comfort and ease was a priority in their life. Don't ever make that mistake. Say, Lord, you're first in my life, and your laws are so important for me.

I never want to violate a single law in scripture. I believe the only way we can keep sin away from us is by filling our hearts with the love of God. I think that's part of the meaning of what Jesus said about a man

who had a demon, and somehow the demon got cast out.

And when the demon got cast out, he left his heart empty. Now what happened? That demon went and called seven other demons and came back and looked at his heart. It was empty, clean, cleansed from all sin.

They all came and occupied it. How did they occupy it? Because the house was vacant. So what the Lord taught in that parable is, don't keep your heart vacant.

If you want to keep those demons of sin, sometimes all the sins away from you, make sure your heart is filled with the fervent love for Jesus Christ. That'll keep sin away. If you want to stop being attracted by the world, love Jesus with all your heart.

If you men want to stop being attracted by other women, love your wife with all your heart. That's the solution. And if you love Jesus with all your heart, there won't be a place for other affections.

And that's why we've got to beware of the false prophets who come along and say, oh, that's okay, we've got to live in this world. And that's exactly what they said in the Old Testament, and that's exactly why God had to discipline them. And that's why very often God has to discipline us.

I believe that if we go astray and God disciplines us, it's a good sign. One of the tragic things I have seen is people who have gone astray from the truth and they are not being disciplined by God. Do you know what that proves? It says in Hebrews 12 that such people are not sons.

God doesn't treat them as sons. You know, it's like if I see my neighbor's child or some little child on the road doing something wrong, I don't go and punish him or I don't even question him, I don't even rebuke him. Do you do it? No.

For something, one percent of that, you would discipline your child. But something that's a hundred times worse, you don't do anything. And I say, why don't you do it? Because you say, that's not my child.

And I see somebody who claims to be a Christian doing something grossly wrong, and I say, Lord, why don't you discipline that person? He says, he's not my child. Maybe he was, but not any longer. He's backslidden to the point where he won't listen anymore.

So I feel it's a very serious thing when I can do something wrong and not be disciplined. I want to be disciplined every time I do something wrong. I don't want to wait 490 years to be disciplined like the Israelites.

Do you want to wait 490 years to be disciplined? You won't be alive. I want to be disciplined within 24 hours. Within 24 hours, I say, Lord, if you ever see in my life, I tell you fellas, brothers and sisters, make a covenant with God.

Say, Lord, if you ever see in my life that some other love is coming in, within 24 hours, discipline me. Whatever discipline you choose, do it. But I want to come back to you, because God's plans are for my welfare, my good.

That means, you see, that's what faith means. Faith means I believe what we read. Turn back to Jeremiah.

That's a lovely passage there. Jeremiah 29, verse 11. I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord.

Plans for welfare, not for calamity. To give you a future and a hope. God's plans are always for my, not for my good, but for my very best.

Good is a weak word, a very weak word. God's plans are for my very best. To give me a future, to give me a hope.

Think of a father who is planning for his child. You know, as the child comes to, say, 8th, 9th, 10th standard, and the father begins to plan for that child, what am I going to train him for? 11th, 12th standard, what shall I train him for? It's something like that. God plans for my future, to give me a wonderful future.

And I say, Lord, I believe that. And think if you have faith in your father, if a little child has got faith in his father, and the father says, listen, I've taken all factors into consideration, my son, my daughter, and I believe this is the best for you. He says, son, can you believe that I've got more wisdom than you? I've been in the world a little longer than you, and out of love for you, I'm telling you this is the best course you can do.

Certainly, God, when it comes to God, earthly fathers may not have that much wisdom, but God, He's got such perfect wisdom. And He says, when I tell you, don't go down that path, take this. You can be absolutely sure that it's for my welfare and for my good.

Everything. And that's why He sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts, you know, to prompt us, like it says in Isaiah 30, 21, you'll hear a voice behind you saying, turn this way, turn that way. We hear that, you know.

You look at a picture that is lust-provoking, and you hear a voice saying, turn away. We all hear it. Or you're tempted to say something to somebody rude, and the Holy Spirit says, no, because shut your mouth now.

Forget it. Forget what insult that person gave you. We hear that voice.

Nobody can say, you know, a lot of people say, I can't hear the voice of God. Who said? Haven't you heard these voices that I've just told you about right now? When you're tempted, whose voice was that? It wasn't the voice of the devil. It certainly wasn't your voice.

Your voice loved to do that. It was the voice of the Holy Spirit saying, don't look there, don't say that, don't do that. It was the Holy Spirit.

But whether we listened or another thing, and what happened when you did not listen? You know what happened? The Holy Spirit let you go your way, because God loves a cheerful giver. He doesn't catch us by the neck. He says, come on, obey me.

This is the best path for you. You know, I've always been amazed by this wonderful thing that God even allows people to go to hell without stopping them. That terrifies me.

It really terrifies me that every day, think of how many people went to hell today since the morning, since we got up in the morning, up until this time, in the last thirteen, fourteen hours. Do you know how many hundreds of thousands of people went to hell today? God let them go. He didn't stop them.

He let them go. And that terrifies me because He can let me go in the direction I want. Because way back when He created man, He said, there's one thing I'll never take away from man, his free will.

He'll never take it away. Even after we are born again, He doesn't take it away. You can choose.

After you are born again, you can choose to tell lies if you want. Sure. He won't stop you.

You can choose to lust with your eyes if you want. He won't stop you. It terrifies me, I tell you.

I wish God would catch me by the scruff of my neck and pull me back, but He doesn't. Because if He did that, heaven will be filled with people who have always got to be held by the scruff of their neck. No.

God's going to populate heaven with people who say, Lord, I love to do that. I love to go the way you want me to go. Heaven's going to be filled with such people who really choose the way of godliness without any pressure.

Many times, haven't you noticed how sometimes I think God will tell you two, three times, don't do that, don't do that, don't do that. But sometimes He just tells you once. That's all.

And you go ahead and do it and you never hear that voice again. Maybe till the next time. I tell you, that should scare us.

It should scare us that God can allow me to go down a self-chosen path of destruction that can ruin my life, ruin my effectiveness for God, and He won't stop me. Because He's given me His word. And it says here, I want you to see this.

If you will believe me, the Lord says that I have plans for your welfare and a hope, what will you do? You will come and call upon me, verse 12, Jeremiah 29, 12, and pray to me. You will seek me. Prayer is a means by which we seek God and say, God, I want you.

I want this plan which you've got for my life to be fulfilled in my life. So here, for example, this evening you're hearing a word saying, Thus said the Lord, I have got plans for you, which are for your very best, to give you a future and a hope. How are you going to respond to that? How are you going to respond to that when you go away from here and you're tempted with 101 things? Are you going to forget it after the meeting is over? Or are you going to go into verse 12? Then you will come and pray to me.

I have faith. I believe that your plan is for my welfare and my good. I believe you're my Father and everything that you've planned is for my good.

And I want to seek you. And if you've told me to love you with all my heart, soul, strength and mind, that must be for my good. And I will listen to you.

It's a wonderful promise. And whenever God, I believe the eyes of the Lord are always moving throughout the earth to strongly support those whose hearts are perfect towards Him, those whose hearts are completely His. That's how it is said in the NASB.

Those whose hearts are completely His. 2 Chronicles 16 verse 9. Those whose hearts are completely His. The eyes of the Lord are moving.

Wherever He finds somebody whose heart is completely His, God strongly supports that person. And I believe God's, I think He finds very, very few. And then He says, listen to this wonderful verse.

And you will seek me. Verse 13. And you will find me when you search for me with all your heart.

So from that verse, I come to this conclusion that if I have not found God's perfect plan for my life, if I have not found God as a very real present help close to me, the answer must be that I have not sought Him with all my heart. Because He says, you will find me if you search for me with all your heart. You will.

Who is the one who doesn't find Him? There are lots of people in the world who don't find Him. Well, I don't believe the fault is with God. Definitely not.

If they searched for Him with all their heart, they would have found Him. If they had made Him a priority in their life, they would have found Him. My brothers and sisters, you know, like we tell a student who's a good mathematics teacher, who's trying to teach a student how he got a sum wrong.

We'll tell him, listen, go back and start from the beginning and go through those 20 steps and try and see where you went wrong. It's like a computer programmer going through all the lines of a program to see where something was wrong. That's how they debug that program.

That's how that student discovers, hey, this is where I went wrong. Can I suggest something to you? Can you take a little time sometime when you go home and look back over your life and see, over your past life from the time you became a Christian, were there other things that took priority in your life over the Lord? I'm just asking you to debug your life. I'm just trying to ask you to find where you went astray, where you went wrong in some step.

And that's why the rest of the sum was wrong. And so the teacher will say, listen, son, you went wrong in step three and therefore all your steps thereafter were wrong. Can you think of what went wrong in your life? Did you start off well? Your first two steps were right, son.

See, those first two steps were absolutely right. But in the third step, when you were doing that sum, you were careless. And you went on working as though everything was okay.

And your answer is completely wrong. And the Lord says, listen, you were okay when you started. But at this particular point, your job became priority.

That's why you slackened off in your devotion to Me. Your comfort became a priority and that's why you started buying things which you could not afford and you got into debt. Or you started judging other people and passing opinions of other people and that became a priority in your life.

What is the result? You didn't have time to judge yourself. And that's why, here, twenty years later, see, your entire sum is wrong. Because eighteen years ago, you stopped judging yourself.

You were always passing opinions about other people. No wonder everything is wrong. What shall we do now? You can't get those eighteen years back.

Impossible. Even Almighty God cannot give us time back. You know that a lot of things God cannot do.

He can't suddenly say, okay, this is 1984 now, not 2003. God can't do that. Sometimes we wish He could.

Lord, I wish it were 1984 all over again. I would live my life differently. But it is not 1984.

It is 2003 and let me tell you the bad news. Next year will be 2004 if you don't take it seriously. So we better take it seriously at least now and say, Lord, I want to see where my sum went wrong, where I made a mistake.

And you will always find you went wrong where loving Jesus was not a priority in your life. Something else became a major issue which is not related to your loving Jesus with all your heart. Do you know that the Bible says, let none of you suffer as a busybody in other people's matters.

Do you know the number of believers I have met in my life who have suffered endlessly because they have been busybodies in things that don't even concern them one percent. I mean if it will concern them at least one percent, okay, even then they should have left it alone. But things that don't concern them one percent, they have become specialists.

Have you suffered like that? Have you been careless? Well, we can't do anything about the past but I will tell you the good news is we can do a great deal about the future. We can get up and run so fast and try and catch up with some of those other runners who are running steadily all these years. Run faster.

Say, Lord, I know in my life when I realized that I was not fervent in my devotion to the Lord, I said, Lord, I want to repent and I want to turn and I want to run fast so that I can catch up, make up for all the years that I have slackened off where ministry became a big thing for me. That was my snare. After I came to Christian work, ministry, ministry, ministry and Jesus sort of faded for a number of years and I became a backslider because ministry was a big thing.

For you it may be something else. But I turned back and I said, Lord, I have lost a lot of years because ministry became a big thing and Jesus was not as important as ministry and I want to repent of that. I want to really come back to you and I want to run fast and make up for all the years that I have lost.

I hope you will turn to the Lord like that and say, Lord, I want to seek you with all my heart and I want to make sure that every single thing you say in your word, I'll obey. Everything. You have often heard me speak about staying within our boundaries.

Do you think that's a small thing? It's not a small thing. The first sin in the world was when Adam and Eve went outside their boundary. They got involved in something and God said, that's none of your business.

Leave that tree alone. Here are a lot of things you can do in Eden. Just leave that one alone.

And they went and got outside their boundary, got involved in things which was none of their business. And think of the things you've suffered in, my brother, sister, just like Adam because you got involved in things which are none of your business, which you should have just left alone. So it's very important to stay within our boundaries.

It's very important to be content with what God has given us because I believe that's one major area where He tests us. See, it's when I'm not content, when I have Jesus and maybe just a few material things and then I want more material things. And I say, I want Jesus but I also want more material things.

That's when a lot of believers get into problems. That's when a lot of people get into problems. In every church, in all of our churches, I've always asked the elders, have you checked up whether any family in

your church is in debt? Nobody should be in debt because the Bible says in Romans 13 verse 8, owe no man anything.

We should never be in debt. And one of the first things whenever new believers come into our church is, I check up. Is, are you in debt? Do you owe anybody? See, most people when they bring people to the Lord, they never check up on that.

They say, are you drinking, you're smoking, you're gambling? Well, I say, okay, that's all that we check up. But also, are you in debt to anybody? You've got to clear that as soon as possible. Don't get into condemnation but clear it as soon as possible.

And learn to live in satisfaction. You see, this is part of loving Jesus with all our heart. I love Jesus with all my heart and I say, okay, I'm satisfied with what I get.

And I will not get into debt. I will not get into debt to feed my children better food. I remember I look back over 20, 25 years ago when my wife and I had very little to live on.

I think we used to go, we used to buy fish maybe once a year because it is expensive. And I was more interested in having the anointing of God and obeying the word than in eating fish. But some people are not.

They'll borrow because they've got to eat fish. Okay, go ahead. Where's the anointing upon your life? God sees that you're more interested in fish than the anointing.

Where's He going to give you the anointing? You're interested in something or better clothes. You've got to get better clothes. Okay.

Never mind if you don't have the anointing. You've got to borrow, get better clothes. What's the result in your life, my brother, sister, of those type of choices you've made? You see the result today with the loss that has come.

I want to encourage you at least in the days to come. Say, Lord, I'll never buy what I can't afford. Just make a simple decision in your life.

I'll never buy what I can't afford. I can live without fish. I can live without meat.

I can be a vegetarian. But I will not get into debt. I can live without a refrigerator.

If that's what's going to get me into debt. You see, it's these down-to-earth practical things. And God says, you're not serious.

You're regular in the meetings. You read the Bible and you talk all this pious religious language, but you're not serious about your Christian life. You're not serious about obeying little words of mine.

When you hear, here's a word behind you saying, turn your eyes away from that, you don't. When you hear a word saying, that's none of your business. Why don't you leave that alone? You don't.

What's the result? Dear brothers and sisters, you will search me, the Lord says, and find me when you seek for me with all your heart. And when I am the most important person in your life, and nothing is more important to you than me, the Lord says, you'll find me. And there are a lot of people who find the Lord,

and a lot of people who don't find the Lord.

And I tell you, there is a difference. There is a difference in any church between those who have found the Lord, and those who haven't found Him. Between those who are in constant touch with the Lord, and those who are in occasional touch with the Lord.

Even among, you know the Lord says, even among the elders in the seven churches in Revelation, they were not all fervent on fire for the Lord. Five of them were thorough backsliders. Backslidden so badly.

And I have seen that even in the elders in many of our churches. We always have elders meetings. And I always tell them, please read Revelation 2 and 3. Read it, read it, read it, and see if it applies to you.

See if the Lord has to say to you, you have left your first love. I mean, if that applies to elders, how much more to us? That's what I'm trying to say. Does the Lord have to say to you, you have a name that you're alive.

Does the Lord have to say to you, you're not on fire, you're lukewarm. Once upon a time you were fervent, passionate in your devotion to me, but it's all gone. It's just routine, ritual now.

You go through all the motions. It's like a wife who still cooks the food and still washes the dishes and still keeps the house clean, but she doesn't love her husband anymore. It's all gone.

And all the work is done, but it's not the same. You shall seek me and find me when you search for me with all me heart, and I will be found by you. And I will restore your fortunes.

Yeah, I want to be in that place all the days of my life. It doesn't matter if there are many good things I miss in life, like eating fish every day. I'm prepared to sacrifice that every day of my life if I can have God.

If I cannot afford some of the luxuries of life because I want to obey the word which says, oh no man anything, I'm willing to give up those luxuries to obey God's word because the anointing means more to me than those luxuries. Food is not the important thing. I'll tell you this, my brothers and sisters, God will test you on food.

God will test you on comforts. Do you know how Sodom became Sodom? Sodom has got a reputation for a city that was so bad that God sent fire. The fire of hell came upon a city on earth and burned it up.

I don't know whether God's ever done that before or after. It must have been pretty bad. God sent his angels to Sodom and said, go and examine and see what the condition of that city is.

You know it's a human way of saying God was looking at that city. It's getting bad, bad, bad, bad. It's so bad it's got to be destroyed.

Do you think Lot was a wholehearted person? Anybody thinks Lot was a wholehearted person? Far from it. Do you think his wife was wholehearted? Thorough worldly people, but Sodom was so bad that Lot and his wife were the best people in it. Think of that.

Can you imagine the condition of Sodom that Lot and his wife were so good compared to all the rest of the people that he pulled them out and said, destroy the city. These fellows are bad, but they are not bad enough to be burnt up. All the other fellows are so bad.

Now I'll tell you how it started. See Ezekiel chapter 16. Where did Sodom's sin start? It didn't start with sexual sin and homosexuality.

No. It says in Ezekiel 16, and I want you to see what led Sodom astray. Ezekiel 16, 49.

This was the guilt of your sister Sodom. First, arrogance. That means pride.

Second, plenty of food. And third, laziness. And fourth, no compassion for the poor.

That's it. He doesn't say they told lies, they fought with people. No, no, no.

Those things all come much later. It starts with pride. You think you're somebody.

You think you can straighten everybody out because you're the holy man, you're the expert, you're the specialist. That's where it begins. Pride.

You think you know so much, you're better than that person. You brought up your children better than somebody else. And 101 filthy, corrupt things that make a man proud.

That's Sodom. Second, plenty of food. We must eat good food.

We must always have good food. If we have to get into debt, we get into debt, but we're going to have good food. Okay? Sodom.

That's Sodom. Third, laziness. Too lazy.

Too lazy to do what God wants you to do. Too lazy to discipline yourself to be what God wants you to be. Too lazy to study the scriptures.

Too lazy to know God through the scriptures. Laziness. You have the time, but you're lazy.

You don't think laziness is a sin? It is the sin of Sodom. It says, this was the guilt of Sodom. They were downright lazy.

That's Sodom. And fourth, they were not compassionate to the poor and the needy. They were hard.

I can imagine the people in Sodom were very hard on their servants. Very hard in the way, unmerciful way they treated the servants at home. Believers who are like that.

Very hard on their servants. That's Sodom. You know why we've taken such a strong stand on that in CFC? Because that's Sodom.

And we don't want to become another Sodom. That's why. No compassion for the poor and needy.

And all this is because something else has taken priority in our heart. It's not fervent love for Jesus. Other things.

Brothers and sisters, let me invite you to repent. To search, seek after God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind. And say, God, I want to value the anointing and the power of the Holy Spirit from today onwards more than anything in my life.

I'm not going to let food be a priority in my life. I'm not going to let sleep and laziness be a priority in my life. I'm not going to think I'm an expert who can set everybody else straight.

And Lord, I want to radically change my attitude to those who are not as fortunate as I am. Those who are not as spiritual as I am. Poor and needy spiritually.

Lord, I want to be compassionate towards them. I want to be merciful to someone who is not spiritual, who is still carnal. I don't want to judge him.

I want to judge myself. I want to spend my life judging myself. And not think I'm superior to someone.

I don't want to look down on a single person. I want to be compassionate towards those who are needy around. May God help us.

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