

# The Church: A Three Storey Building

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of God's love as the foundation of the church and the necessity of humility and discipleship in our walk with God.*

**Duration:** 1:08:50

**Scripture:** Proverbs 11:22, Proverbs 22:6, Matthew 18:15, Ephesians 2:14-15, Ephesians 3:10, Ephesians 4:16, James 1:15

**Topics:** "Church Unity", "Godly Families"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of repeating key messages in the church, especially for new members and growing children. It encourages elders to prioritize repeating foundational truths over always seeking new teachings for personal honor. The sermon also highlights the significance of teaching children, building godly family lives, and fostering unity in the church as a reflection of God's wisdom to the spiritual realm.

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## Transcript

The Old Testament prophets were never ashamed to repeat their messages again and again and again. This is one of the things that has encouraged me to see the need to repeat things that we have said many times before. For one reason, because there are new people who have come to the church, to our churches, even in the last year or two, who have never heard these things.

And secondly, because in the last few years, people who were children once upon a time have grown up to become adults who can understand. And they need to hear this too. So that's something I want to encourage the elders in our churches to remember.

If there are new people coming and there are children growing up, don't say, well I preached that three years ago, I don't need to preach it now. Sometimes I find preachers seek honor by always wanting to say something new. They've got their own honor in mind more than the good of the people.

A kindergarten teacher is never ashamed, year after year after year, to teach ABC, CAT is cat, 2 plus 2 is 4. Every single year, for 30 years. And the second standard teacher will teach the same thing year after year, because there are new students. Because they've got the good of the students in mind always.

So if we are in touch with God, we will always be seeking the good of God's people who are with us. And also there is another reason for this. Charles Finney, some of you have heard of him.

He lived in the mid 1800s, about 160 years ago. He was one of the first people who clearly preached the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Long before the Pentecostal movement started 50 years later, Charles Finney was mightily baptized in the Holy Spirit and became one of the greatest evangelists in America.

He never spoke in tongues. D.L. Moody followed him, again preaching the baptism in the Holy Spirit and never spoke in tongues. A.B. Simpson was another great man of God who started a great movement called the Christian Mission Alliance who preached the baptism in the Holy Spirit but never spoke in tongues.

But Charles Finney said, after years and years of preaching, that he's discovered unless you preach a truth 10 times, most people don't really get it. It's very, very important. I've discovered that through the years.

And that's why people who listen to my messages on the internet have often told me that when they heard it for the fourth or fifth time they were really gripped by something that they never were gripped by the first time they heard it. So don't get tired of listening. Thank God for the internet and for the facilities we have today with CDs and DVDs.

Because the world's population has grown, God has allowed all these things to be available to us. And here in CFC, by the grace of God, we have made use of every technological advance as soon as it has come. When we started, we started with cassette tapes right from, almost from the beginning, the very first month.

And we began to passing out those tapes. When CDs began to be available, we moved immediately to CDs. And as far as I know, we were the first people in the whole world who produced a 70-hour study of the whole Bible in one single CD audio.

And then we moved on to DVDs, we moved on to DVDs. And when the internet opened up, we moved in there. Our aim is to reach the whole world with the full gospel.

Jesus Christ, our Savior, from sin, Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, and Forerunner, who takes us into the presence of God, our Father. That is the full gospel. So, one of the things which we have taught much about, which I want to share, is that the church is a three-story building, symbolically speaking.

Like every building, it's got to have a good foundation. And you don't build a three-story before you build the first story, second story, and the third story. So, for example, this building has got two stories.

One here, and one on top, and the foundation underneath. The foundation is very important. That's got to be laid first.

And the church is a three-story building. The foundation of God's work in the church is God's perfect love for us. John 17, verse 23, is, I believe, the most glorious truth found in the whole Bible.

The most glorious truth found in the whole Bible. That is, God loves me, if I'm a disciple, as much as He loved Jesus Christ. There are many verses in the Bible which say that God loves us.

But as far as I know, there's only one verse that clearly teaches how much He loves us. That's John 17, verse 23. I know it revolutionized my life more than 35, nearly 40 years ago, when I got revelation on it for the first time.

I'd read through the whole Bible, different times, but I read it, but it never gripped me. Till one day it hit home to me that God loved me as much as He loved Jesus Christ. How do you know how much He loved Jesus Christ? He protected Him from Herod's soldiers when He was a helpless baby.

And He prevented people from throwing Him over the cliff in Nazareth when they were angry with His preaching. He did not allow the storm to drown Him in the sea. So many ways He protected Him, preserved Him.

He protected Him from germs of disease. I'm sure there were the germs of disease in those days, as there are today. People died of different sicknesses.

Jesus couldn't be touched by them. He was sick. It says He was acquainted with sickness in Isaiah 53.

But He never died of it. He had to become sick, because that's how He could be identified with the human race, who also faces sickness. To be sick is not a sin.

And the fact that Jesus is acquainted with sickness, it says in Isaiah 53, is proof that sickness is not a sin. And it's not a punishment for anything. So He was protected and cared for by Jesus.

And I was so gripped by this that God gave me the words of a song that some of us have sung. That what He's done for Jesus, He will do for you. As He cared for Jesus, He will care for you.

And as He helped Jesus to live in victory, He will help you. It changed my life to understand that if God loved me as much as He loved Jesus, and I saw that many times in the Gospel of Matthew I read, Jesus did this so that the scripture might be fulfilled. Even His birth in Bethlehem, so that the scripture might be fulfilled, which was written five, six hundred years earlier, that He'd be born there.

And even when He finally died saying, I thirst, He said, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. He lived in Nazareth so that the scripture might be fulfilled, that He might be called the Nazarene. So, I saw that means every part of His life, from birth to death, was planned by God.

And if God loved me as much as He loved Jesus, and there's no partiality with God, if Jesus is really the firstborn among many brothers, as it says in Romans 8, 29, and I am a brother of Jesus, then there's no partiality with God. I never showed any partiality to my children. What I did for my older son, I do for all my younger sons.

God's better than me. What He did for His eldest son, Jesus, He would do for me. Do you know that Jesus is called the only begotten Son in John 3, 16? He came down to earth as the only begotten Son, but He went up to heaven as the firstborn Son.

You've got to understand that. He's no longer the only begotten. On the day of resurrection, He told Mary Magdalene in John chapter 20, go and tell my brothers.

That's the first time He specifically referred to His disciples as His brothers. They became His brothers on the day of His resurrection. And Romans 8, 29 says God's plan is that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Heaven is going to be populated with the younger brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. That's you and me. That's why we call each other brother-sister.

That's the highest title you can ever get. That's why I often tell people, don't call me pastor or reverend or all these lowdown worthless titles. Call me brother.

Brother of Jesus Christ. What higher title can you get than that? Absolutely impossible. So I'm a younger brother of Jesus Christ.

And if you've surrendered your life to Christ, you're a younger brother or sister of Christ. So He's the firstborn among many brothers. And there's no partiality with God.

He will not do for His eldest son what He won't do for others. No. Everything He did for His eldest son, He'll do for all of us.

If you can be gripped by this, why? Because He loves us as He loved Jesus. You know, if you're not established on this foundation, it'll be like this building on a shaky foundation. Something will happen and the building will begin to shake.

Why do you become shaky in different times of your life? Because you don't believe what scripture says. That God loves you as He loved Jesus. It's not for everybody.

I know it's not for everybody. But it's those who want to be disciples. If you're really sincere in saying, Lord, I don't want to just go to heaven when I die.

I'm not just a convert. I want to be a learner. I want to learn from Jesus' life and I want to follow Jesus.

Then you're a disciple. You may not be perfect. I'm not perfect.

But I'm better than I was a few years ago because I've learned more. And I've learned to follow better. It's like swimming.

The first day you go to learn swimming, you hardly know anything. Even after one year you see somebody swimming. They're not so good.

But see them 20 years later. They become so perfect. Everything, over a period of time, you become better and better and better.

So don't get discouraged if in the early days, you're like as if you're struggling in the water following Jesus. Never mind. Don't give up.

Don't ever give up following Jesus. The person who keeps going to that swimming pool will become a first class swimmer one day. In the same way, the one who says, I'm going to determine to learn from Jesus, said, learn from me, Jesus said.

He never told us to learn how to sing or how to preach. He said, learn humility from me. Learn from Jesus how to be humble.

Why did he say that? Because it's the humble who receive grace. So I see him as my elder brother. I see that God loves me just like he loved Jesus.

Everything he did for Jesus, he will do for me, if, there's a big capital IF, if I humble myself as he humbled himself. Because that law doesn't change. Do you know why God exalted Jesus Christ? It says in Philippians chapter 2 and verse 8 and 9, He humbled himself becoming obedient to the death of the cross.

Therefore, that is why God exalted him and gave him a name above every name. Why has he got the highest name? Because he humbled himself more than everybody else. So he was not exalted because he was the son of God.

He came as a man. Because he humbled himself and right went below everybody else, born in a stable, below everybody else. I've never heard of a human being, even the beggar's children are not born with the cow sheds.

He went underneath everybody when he was born. He died on the cross. The worst death that was ever invented by man.

It's almost as though Jesus waited in heaven until the worst possible death was invented by man, crucifixion, and then decided to come to earth so that he could die in the worst possible way, so that he'd be underneath everybody, even in death. All through his life, he humbled himself, humbled himself, humbled himself. And God's law, according to God's law, he was exalted above everybody else.

So who's going to sit at the right hand and left hand of Jesus in the final day? I know. I don't know the names. But it may not be an apostle.

Maybe one apostle, maybe some widow in Africa who was faithful, or in some village in India, I don't know. Whoever humbled themselves the most next to Jesus will be on his left hand and right hand. That possibility is open to everyone.

To you, and to me. Jesus said, when James and John said, give us that seat, he said, I can't give it, sorry. It's in the Father's hand.

But we know from this verse who he's going to give it to. There's not a different law for Jesus and a different law for you. He was exalted because he humbled himself, and you will be exalted if you humble yourself.

The Bible says, humble yourself on the mighty hand of God, he'll exalt you. I want to say to you in the name of Jesus, believe this. Everything that God did for Jesus, he will do for you if you fulfill the same conditions as he did.

It is because he was humble and feared God, that he prayed with loud crying and tears to never sin once in his life. Therefore he never sinned. God kept him from sinning.

I want to say to you, God will keep you from sinning. From your anger, and your lust, and your wandering eyes and wandering thoughts, and tongue and everything, if you have that same cry in your heart. Like Jesus had, because he feared God.

Humility and the fear of God were the secret of Jesus' life. But the law is the same for all of us, God's children. So if there's something you don't get and you say, I can't walk like Jesus, the answer, the problem is with you.

You are not willing to fulfill the same condition. You see in a family, for example, two children of equal intelligence. Equal intelligence.

And one does exceptionally well, and the other does not so well. What's the difference? One works very hard, and the other is just lazy. So it's not that God gave one more intelligence than the other, no.

So in the same way, God loves us equally, but he won't do for you what he did for Jesus if you don't fulfill the conditions. But he loves you as he loved Jesus, that doesn't change. He will protect you from evil men.

You know the number of times in the Bible it says they couldn't kill him. Why? Because they were not strong enough? No, only for one reason, you read in John's Gospel, his hour had not yet come. I believe that.

I cannot die until my hour has come. No sickness, no accident, no nothing. I cannot die of any of these things until my hour has come.

I don't know when it will come, and I don't know how it will be. That's up to God. Jesus was killed in the worst possible way when the hour came with crucifixion.

Any type of death is better than that. So I'm not saying it won't be painful, I'm not saying it will be easy, but it will not be before God's time. Not sure.

If you have decided to be a disciple just like Jesus was. It is impossible for Jesus to die before his time, and I want to say to you, if you are a disciple, it's impossible for you to die before Jesus' time. It's impossible for Herod's soldiers, or any police, or anybody to come and capture you and harm you.

God will keep you away from that if your time has not come. He protected him when he was a baby, but he did not protect him in Gethsemane. Because the time had come.

It's wonderful when you look at the life of Jesus and say, God loves me as you love Jesus. My dear brothers and sisters, be established on this foundation. Never move away from it.

You know what if we laid a foundation here and then started building over there. That's how some people are. They believe all this and in the time of trial they go and get all worried and anxious because they are building somewhere else.

In your time of trial, build on this foundation. God loves me as he loved Jesus Christ, because I have decided that in my life, I'm going to be a learner and follower of Jesus. I want to tell you about Jesus that he had no ambition on earth except to do the will of his father.

Can you say that? I have no ambition on earth except to do the will of my father. I mean the will of God is to make you a millionaire. So be it.

If the will of God for you is to keep you struggling financially till the end of your life, so be it. God's will is different for different people. He may keep you as an ordinary third class school teacher all your life or make you CEO of a big company.

That's his choice. We don't envy others, we don't question others. But God, you say, Lord, I only have one ambition in my life.

To complete my course, do your will. That's all. Let your will be done in my life as it is done in heaven.

I can guarantee you, take my word for it, you'll have the best possible life you can ever live. Say, Lord, I want to marry the person you want me to marry. And God will bring somebody even from the other side of the world if necessary to marry you.

God can do that. He does amazing things for those who seek his will. So be established on this foundation.

Everything is dependent on this. God loves me as he loved Jesus Christ. Then on top of that we built the first story.

And the first story is our personal walk with God. Walking in the light. If we walk in the light as God is in the light, we have fellowship with him.

We read in 1 John 1.7. And the way to walk in the light, light is something that reveals everything that's hidden, that's dark. And that refers to keeping a good conscience. It's very, very important.

The first story is to keep a good conscience 24 hours of the day, 7 days a week. This is the way to build a solid structure. Turn with me to Acts of the Apostles, chapter 24.

This is one of the great secrets of Paul's life. Acts of the Apostles, chapter 24. And verse 15.

Paul says, I know one thing for sure. By the way, he's standing before King Felix in a day of judgment. And he was also called a cult leader.

I've been called a cult leader, even by some people who were with us, enjoyed every benefit and learned everything from us for 30 years, and then left us because they got offended over a little correction. A little correction. Just like Judas Iscariot got offended over a little correction.

They left us and said, this is all a cult, and he's a cult leader. I said, okay. God bless you.

I've got nothing to say. Paul says, I admit, verse 14, that according to the way which they call a cult, those days Paul and his Christians were called a cult. All Christians.

He said, I admit it. They call it a cult, but it's not a cult. It's a way.

The way which I walk. I serve the God of our fathers. And what is the mark of this so-called Christian cult? They believe everything written in the Bible.

That's our crime. We believe everything written in the Bible, and we seek to obey everything written in the Bible. That's why they say we are a false teacher.

Because they don't do that. Believing everything. In those days, the Bible was the law and the prophets.

39 books. And, the second thing, we believe that there's going to be a resurrection, verse 15, of the righteous and the wicked. I believe that.

I believe there'll be two resurrections. The resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked, many years later. But I want to be in the resurrection of the righteous, Paul says.

And so, in view of this, verse 16, in view of what? There'll be two resurrections, and I want to be in the resurrection of the righteous. What do I do? I don't sit back and say, well, I accepted the Lord 30 years ago, so I'm going to be in the resurrection of the righteous. That's the theology you believe.

It's not what Paul believed. Paul said, in view of this, I do my best to maintain always, 24-7, a blameless conscience before God and before men. Why, Paul? Because I want to be in the resurrection of the

righteous.

Hey, isn't it true you accepted the Lord 30 years ago? Some other preachers say that if you've accepted the Lord, you'll definitely be in the resurrection of the righteous. They can believe what they like. They can teach what they like.

But I'll tell you the truth God's revealed to me. In view of this, I do my very best to keep my conscience blameless at all times before God and before men. And therefore I know I will be in the resurrection of the righteous.

Let those other preachers preach what they like, and let those foolish people who want to believe that, believe that if they like. They will discover in eternity, too late, how wrong they were. I'd rather believe Paul any day rather than all these wandering preachers who go to Bible schools and write their own theories.

Because this is too risky a matter for me to be in doubt about. My eternal destiny? You go to the best doctor to do surgery for your heart? That's nothing, man, compared to this. This is eternal destiny.

You're careful about getting the best doctor to get a heart surgery? And you're not concerned to know your eternal destiny? You've got to be absolutely crazy. Paul says, in view of the fact there's going to be two resurrections, I do my best to keep a blameless conscience 24-7. Not only toward God, that means as soon as I'm aware of a sin, I confess it to God immediately.

24-7. It's like saying I got a thorn in my foot, I immediately take it out. If you get a thorn in your foot, how long do you take to take it out? Late in the evening? Five minutes later? Immediately.

I feel a prick in my conscience that I committed a sin, in my thought, immediately I repent, turn to God. I hurt somebody with my words, when should I confess it to God and to men? Immediately. I'm sorry for what I did.

I shouldn't have spoken to you like that. Show me the Christians who live like that on the earth. Show me the Christians who live like that on the earth.

They will preserve the glory in the church. Not just people who come and nod their heads at these messages and don't do it. Tell me honestly, when you sin against a human being and you know you've sinned by what you spoke, how long does it take for you to go and apologize to that person? If it's your wife or your husband or somebody junior to you or your spouse to whom you spoke very rudely, you say, ah, low caste, lower level of society.

If it's my boss, I will say, I'm sorry sir, but who cares for this? You really believe there's a caste system in heaven? You're going to get a big surprise when you see the Lord. Big surprise. Paul kept his conscience clear before God and men.

That's the key in the resurrection of the righteous. It's those who take that seriously who build a solid first story. I don't want a weak first story.

I don't want a weak foundation. I don't want a weak first story. I want a solid first story.

Turn with me to 1 Timothy in chapter 1. 1 Timothy chapter 1. You know sometimes people can say, oh brother Zach, when are you going to stop preaching before God and men all the time? We heard it so many times. I'm reminded of a man who went to hear D.L. Moody preach and D.L. Moody had seven days

of meetings and every day he preached on You Must Be Born Again. So this unconverted guy got fed up.

He came to Moody and said, when are you going to stop preaching on You Must Be Born Again? I said, until you are born again. Keep a good conscience always before God and men. Until you come to the place where you do keep a good conscience always 24-7 before God and men.

If all of you have come to that place then you don't need this message. But I seriously doubt whether even 90% of you have come to that place. Always you keep your conscience clear before God.

Some people manage that. And before men. Timothy 1 verse 19 Keep a faith and a good conscience.

He says in verse 18 Fight a good fight. For what? To keep faith and a good conscience. Some people have rejected keeping a good conscience and they have suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.

I've been on ships and I know how important it is to follow the path that is marked out in the olden days it was by lights now we have it by GPS and all that. You see on the roads you just follow GPS to find your way to some other place. But out in the sea or near a harbor if you don't follow that exact route that is shown you can hit the rocks.

Because there are so many rocks and in the olden days they marked it by lights and boys put on the sea now by GPS where you can go exactly in that channel you will never hit a rock. You don't need to know where the rocks are. If you follow this channel you will be safe.

We don't need to know where all the dangers and sins in the world are. If you follow your good conscience your conscience says this way in a ship and you turn around and go this way with a car you just miss the road and come back but with a ship if you don't follow it you hit the rock and you get shipwrecked because you didn't follow the conscience you thought you knew better than what the GPS told you to navigate your ship. You suffer shipwreck in regard to your faith.

Faith and a good conscience go together. The more you keep a good conscience the more you will have faith to trust God for many things. Many a time you can't trust God because you don't have a good conscience.

So he says fight the good fight to keep faith and a good conscience. That's how we walk with God in the light and it's not a standing still in the light just like a child goes to school doesn't stand still in one standard second standard forever. Third to sixth moves on as you discover new truths and you live according to greater light your conscience becomes more sensitive and you become more and more aware of sins which you were not aware of before.

A conscience is like a weighing machine that was dead when we were unconverted. You could put one ton on it and the needle in the weighing machine won't even move but then you get converted and the needle begins to move and it registers not before that then it improves and it registers when you put 100 kilos then it improves and it registers when you put 10 kilos hey the weighing machine is getting better and then it registers when you put 1 kilo and it begins to register when you put 100 grams and 1 gram and 1 milligram that's a weighing machine getting more and more sensitive conscience becoming more and more sensitive to little little sins which you were not aware of before. As you come closer and closer to God the light shines brighter upon you.

Very very important. Don't even think of building the church or getting the glory back into the church if you don't get the glory back into your own life first. Preserve the glory of God in your life by keeping a good conscience and walking in the light.

Don't be satisfied with the light you had last year of Christ likeness. There were many things I knew of Christ likeness years ago I know much more today. The greatest definition of sin in the Bible is Romans 3 23 all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and now we are talking about preserving the glory of God in the church that means to be free from sin because sin is to come short of the glory of God the glory of God is to be free from sin and the glory of God in the church is to make sure that we are free from sin that we are conscious of.

You don't have to be condemned about sin that you are unconscious of. There are a lot of sins that we don't even know they are sin. Okay, don't worry.

Like a second standard student studying mathematics does not have to worry about geometry and algebra and even when you get a fourth or fifth standard you don't have to worry about calculus but you must know what it is at your level so don't worry about somebody who has gone ahead of you and see certain things as sin you don't see it as yet and that's what I teach husbands and wives don't imagine that your wife is in the same class as you you may be in sixth standard and she may be in second standard and she may be having a perfect conscience you know more than that and your conscience may not be good for God because she is getting 100% at her level but you are getting 50% in sixth standard there may be many areas where you have more light than her but don't look down on her saying hey,

you don't see this as sin no, she hasn't come to sixth standard she hasn't studied geometry and algebra she is studying multiplication, division if only you could understand that that all of us are at different levels spiritually you will not judge another person according to your conscience it depends on how much of God's law has been written on their hearts maybe God's law has been written to a great extent on your heart and mind but not so much in the other person's heart and mind that's one of the things that help me to not judge other people I've discovered certain things are sin for me but I say it's not a sin for that person Romans 14 is a great example of that eating food offered to idols for the other person how is that? the same thing not a sin for one person but a sin for

another person yes, for a fourth standard student knowing nothing about calculus it's not sin not at all but for someone in the twelfth standard perhaps it is so we can't judge one another according to our standard this is why Jesus says don't judge you don't know which class your husband is in sometimes a wife may be ahead of the husband spiritually don't judge but we must progress you don't want a child sitting in the third standard for two years must go to the fourth standard next year progress continuously so our conscience becomes more and more sensitive and I want to say also a matter about temptation and sin a lot of people get condemned because they confuse temptation with sin and James chapter 1 and it's a very great chapter on that James chapter 1 I say this so that you can be

delivered from condemnation temptation is different from sin just like to use a medical example a common example which is the example James uses that is different like every woman has in her body the human eggs that can become a baby but it cannot become a baby without conception only when conception takes place that egg becomes an embryo and becomes a baby so James says here verse James 1.15 lust when it is conceived gives birth to sin otherwise it's not sin that means if I have I'm tempted to something that's like there's something within me that has got the potential to become a sin like a woman's egg has a

potential to become a baby but if there's no conception there's no baby and so for conception to take place there must be a union of something with that egg to produce a baby and in

this case it's the union of my will the temptation is there yeah there's a potential for sin there and my will agrees with it yes I want it if a temptation comes into my mind it's just like an egg no baby there I reject it, I don't want it there's no sin, I throw it out I heard of a sailor in the British Navy who was given a very high ranking medal in one of the world wars because when he was travelling near a German ship the German ship threw a grenade you know a grenade is something that you pull out a pin it's a bomb but it explodes only after say 30 seconds or so in which time you throw it by the time it reaches the other ship it explodes over there so this German guy threw the grenade and this brave British sailor he knew it takes 30 seconds he picked it up and threw it back into

the German ship and it exploded over there and they gave him a medal for it for being so smart which has the potential of exploding and I throw it right back I say I don't want that I'm okay he threw it at me there was a possibility of it exploding but I was smart enough to quickly throw it back but if I look at it and examine it a bit then you're finished you've got to be pretty quick to throw it right back so that's then it doesn't explode I threw it right back it didn't explode it did not become sin so just because a thought came into your mind you can be sitting in this church and right now have the filthiest possible thought come into your mind you say that's not a sin you reject it you say I don't want it I don't want it it's not me you rejected it in your mind immediately you've

thrown the grenade right back that'd be no sin if your will didn't yield to it you didn't conceive see however much a girl may be attracted to a handsome young man who's keeping on calling her calling her and she keeps saying no there's no conception she never gets a baby but you ask that girl did you feel attracted to him did you feel attracted yeah boy he was really smart but there's no baby so the fact that you're drawn to some sin doesn't mean you've sinned there's an attraction if there's no attraction there's no temptation you know that if the tree of knowledge of good and evil was filthy, smelly full of thorns and stinking like a toilet dirty toilet and the Lord told Adam don't go near that thank you I don't want to go anywhere near it why did God make it so attractive probably the

most beautiful tree in the garden to ask him am I more important to you than this attractive thing I created was he attracted yes he was attracted but she did not sin when she took it that's when she sinned remember this you're attracted to something you haven't sinned you're attracted to a woman who's rude and haggard and white haired and drooping face and ugly and said don't lust after women no you'd say no problem Lord absolutely every woman's like that but God has made some of them so attractive and he's saying to you do you love me the creator more than what I created it.

Same question that came to Eve. Do you love the creator or the created? Almost every temptation that is the question.

Say no. God, I choose you. That's what you need to say.

There's no concern. Are you attracted? Of course. You don't want to pretend that you are, she's ugly.

That's a lie. How can you say a pretty woman is ugly? Oh, the sunset is so ugly. It's really beautiful.

What's wrong in saying that? But don't admire it, don't look at it, because you'll be tempted. So the fact that you're attracted doesn't mean it's sin, but don't yield to it in your mind. It's very important for this.

When the day I understood this, it delivered me from unnecessary condemnation. But if you're in doubt whether maybe I did yield, then ask the Lord to forgive you. But don't live in condemnation that you're tempted or you feel attracted to something, money.

Money is very attractive, just like the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It's one of the most attractive things on earth. The fact that you're drawn towards it, there's nothing wrong in it.

Don't do anything wrong to get it. Don't put money above God's kingdom. Keep it in its proper place under your feet.

Just like gold is on the streets of heaven, I often say, if you can learn to put gold under your feet, you're ready to go to heaven, as far as money is concerned. Keep it under your feet. So there's a difference between temptation and sin.

Keep a good conscience. Then we go to the second story. The second story is our family life.

If you're a child at home, as far as you're concerned, obedience to your parents. And that's how we start. Honor your father and mother, that it may go well with you.

Jesus honored his father and his earthly foster parents. Mary was his mother, but Joseph was not his father. But God had appointed them.

Jesus honored them and did everything they told him to do. He's our example. So family life, starting as children, if you want to be a godly boy or girl, start by honoring your father and mother.

Never tell them a lie. If you do something wrong, just go to your daddy and mommy and say, I'm sorry, I did that. Please forgive me.

I want to be a better boy. I want to be a better girl. We want CFC children to be truthful children, never telling lies.

We want CFC children to be obedient to their parents in a world full of disobedience. We want CFC children in school to have the best testimony. I remember when my youngest son was in school here in Bangalore.

I asked him a question once. I said, you know all that you've been in your class now for many years with the same students and you watch them. I'm sure you know pretty well who are the ones who cheat in examinations.

And he said, dad, I know them. Everyone except two of us. And we are both from CFC.

How sad and yet how happy I was. That's because in our church we kept on teaching, you must not cheat in an examination. It's better to fail than to pass by cheating.

All your life you'll have a bad conscience. Do you know the number of letters I get from people who say, brother Zack, 20 years ago I cheated and passed an examination and got a certificate and with that certificate I got a job. The whole thing was based on a lie.

What shall I do now? They're tormented in their conscience. Don't wait for that. It doesn't matter if you didn't get 70%.

Be happy with 50%. But don't cheat. Don't try to get the examination paper through different people who say, ah, the paper is out now.

If you pay so much money, you get it. No, no, no. Parents, be careful to teach your children.

Be upright. And then as you seek for marriage, family life, make sure you young people that you seek for a godly person. I often teach young people the 50, 30, 20 rule.

The 50, 30, 20 rule is, man is spirit, soul and body. So, in evaluating a brother or a sister when you consider marriage, give 50% marks for spiritual qualities. Are they born again? Do they want to follow Jesus? That's not everything, but 50%.

And then give 30% marks to other factors like intellectual, same language, intellectual communication ability and social and economic equality. Because, you know, we must have an equal yoke. It would be very difficult for a PhD person to fellowship with a completely illiterate girl from a village.

They may be both born again, but there'll be a lot of incompatibility. So there's nothing wrong. Man is not just spirit.

He's also soul, mind, emotions. So there must be certain amount of equality there, but not 50%, 30%. And then 20% for physical factors like age.

You know, people say, oh, physical factors are not important. Of course they're important. I mean, if you're 25 years old, I don't think you'll marry somebody 75 years old.

It's highly unlikely. You're automatically considering age without even thinking about it. You immediately want to know what's the person's age.

And you want to know, you know, physical attractiveness is not completely unimportant. It is important to a certain extent, but not the most important. Man is not body, soul and spirit.

1 Thessalonians 5.23 gives you the right order. Spirit, soul and body. So 50% I would say is just my own guideline for spiritual values and 30% for earthly values and 20% for physical attractiveness.

But unfortunately in the world, it's not like that. And unfortunately in the world it is beauty and money. And sometimes they look for brains, but sometimes they don't.

But it's usually that. So I remind them always of this verse in Proverbs 11.22. Proverbs 11.22, it says, A beautiful girl, and let me paraphrase it, a beautiful girl who's not spiritually minded is like a pig with a golden ring on its nose. You got it? A beautiful girl who's not spiritually minded is like a pig with a golden ring on its nose.

The nature is the nature of a pig. But it's got this golden ring called beauty. Beauty is actually, if you understand chemistry, you know what molecules are.

You know our face is just full of molecules. And it's a certain arrangement of molecules that we call beauty. That's all there is to it.

You arrange the molecules a little differently and it's not beautiful anymore. So you look at a pretty woman, arrangement of molecules is okay there. That's all there is to it.

The real person is inside. So don't get taken up with the arrangement of molecules. And it says it's like a golden ring.

Now supposing you see a pig with a golden ring and say, ah, that golden ring, I want that golden ring at any cost. And you marry the pig. Don't be so foolish.

That's what happens to a man who just looks at a pretty girl and doesn't bother about whether she's godly or not. So that's the second stage of family life. And then after you get married, it's so important that husband and wife live in a godly way with each other.

Now I want to tell you, the Bible teaches there's only one way for two people to become one. In the Old Testament it was impossible. It was impossible, not difficult, impossible.

Because man's flesh is so strong. The veil was not rent. You cannot be one with each other in the outer court or the holy place.

You can be one with each other only in the most holy place. When the veil is rent, that means the flesh is crucified. If two people crucify their flesh, they will become one.

If one of them is not willing to crucify the flesh, they will not become one. Like I say, if two hands, like husband and wife, will always fight. Clapping is like fighting.

But if one, any one of them, husband or wife, is willing to die to self, there's no sound. You can wave it as much as you like. The other person refuses to fight.

So if one person in a family refuses to fight, there is peace. If both refuse to fight, there'll be fellowship. If both refuse to die, there'll be clash.

If one is ready to die, there'll be peace. If both are ready to die, there'll be fellowship. So it's on the cross that we become one.

The Bible says in Ephesians 2, Jesus stretched out his hand and brought Jew and Gentile together to become one on the cross. Ephesians 2, verse 14 and 15. He destroyed the enmity that is in our flesh.

There is an enmity in our flesh that makes us clash with one another, husband and wife, wife and husband. That's why whenever people get married, every marriage, in the early days and years, there's conflict. That's why whenever newly married people get newly married, I always tell them, two most important lessons in marriage is, ask forgiveness quickly and forgive quickly.

Ask forgiveness quickly, forgive quickly. And never go to bed without settling matters. Never go to bed angry with each other.

This is how we are building the second story. Now you may not accomplish this overnight, you can. It's very easy to ask forgiveness.

It's only pride, only pride that prevents a person from saying, I'm sorry, that is my mistake, please forgive me. How can we do it better? I'm sorry, that is my mistake, please forgive me. How can we do it better? You try saying it.

Very, very difficult for those words to come out of your mouth. They'll get stuck in your throat somewhere there. But that's one of the secrets of happiness in the early years of marriage.

And as you go on in married life, you become more willing to recognize that I'm an imperfect person, married to an imperfect person. And if I think there are so many peculiarities in this partner of mine that I have to bear with, please remember there are equally great peculiarities in you that he has to bear with, or she has to bear with. And if that person is keeping silent, you can also keep silent.

Otherwise you think that you're the only one who's bearing with problems in the other person? No, he's bearing with problems with you and she's bearing with problems in you also, brother. So don't be taken up with how much you have to bear with your partner. So our family life is very important.

You can't build a church, you can't have a glory in the church before you have glory in your personal life and glory in your home. Then we have the glory in the church. So it's very, very important to build a home.

That's why we have so many meetings for families in all of our CFC conferences. Very, very important. Husband and wife must learn to live together and be an example.

It won't come overnight. It may take many years, but determined to get there. You know how some people go to the Gulf or work in different places and for years and years and years they are saving money? Many of you have done that.

And finally, maybe before you retire, you build a house. And you're so happy. You saved enough money to build a house for your retirement.

Isn't that wonderful? In the same way, work in your marriage, save, save, save, like the person saves and saves and saves. Slowly, slowly, you come to a life of happiness together. A little taste of heaven on earth.

It takes time. You can't start building a house the very first year you started earning your salary. No.

But you save a little bit, save a little bit, save a little bit. Finally, you got your house. How many years it took? Some of you took many years to build your own house.

In the same way, to build a good family life, be patient. Just like you're patient to save and save and save and save. Deny yourself, deny yourself, deny yourself.

One day you'll have a wonderful heavenly married life. Even then, there may be the occasional slip-up, don't worry. But your marriage will be more like heaven than like hell.

So very important that in our church, we have godly homes. The strength of a church is not the number of people that sit there, but the quality of the homes that constitute that church. How good are these homes? Not perfect homes, but homes that are pressing on to perfection.

That are saving up money to build a perfect house. That are pressing on to humble themselves and ask forgiveness from one another. And in the home, the other thing is the way we bring up our children.

We want another generation to grow up carrying on the same truths. And there's a great law in scripture. Either scripture is right or it's wrong.

If you believe scripture is right, it says in Proverbs 22 and verse 6, train up a child in the way he should go. And when he's old, he will not depart from it. Now you can say, well, we can't say that will be true of all children.

Some children are different. Then it should be train up a child in the way he should go. And some of them, when they're old, will not depart from it.

Some may depart from it, but that's not what the Bible says. Train up a child in the way he should go. When he or she is old, they will not depart from it.

You train them up in a particular way, in godlessness, they will become godless. You train them up in a godly way, they will become godly. Now, don't give me examples of exceptions to the rule.

You're contradicting scripture then. I want to tell you, let God be true and what? Every man a liar. That's what it says in Romans chapter 3. Let God's word be true and every other testimony people give is a lie.

Train up your children when they are young and start when they are one year old. Teach them to obey. Teach them to speak the truth.

They may have ups and downs. Of course they'll have ups and downs. We all had it.

They'll struggle a bit. Particularly in their teenage years and twenties, there'll be some struggles and all children, some rare children escape it. But otherwise there will be that rebellious teenage spirit in some, maybe your daughter or your son.

But in those are the years when you should be their friends. Don't just rebuke them and shout at them. Hug them and kiss them and love them and pray short prayers with them.

Don't pray long prayers with your teenage difficult boys and girls. It's short prayers. Lord just bless my little daughter or bless my son.

That's enough. And love them. They're going through this up and down stage and say, I'll never be disappointed with you, my girl, my son.

I'll never be disappointed with you. I don't care what you do. There's nothing you can do that can stop me from loving you.

Whatever you may do, it'll never stop me from loving you. Impossible. You know we must say good things to our children.

They face a world where they hear negative, negative, negative things in their school. Sometimes they're not good looking and other people look down on them. People bully them in school.

Where should they get encouragement at home? Do we encourage them? We rebuke them, correct them. I believe we must correct them and ten times for every correction there must be ten encouragements. Very often it's the other way around.

One encouragement and ten corrections. No wonder our children are discouraged. We feed them, clothe them, educate them and push them to get good marks and all that.

But the most important thing is to encourage them. Correct them and encourage them. Boy, that's great.

You know, like a little child comes to you and says, Dad, I discovered today C.A.D. is cat. Wow. You say, really? Do you react like that to your child? Or do you say, Oh, I knew that long ago.

That's the way to drive your child away. Be excited when he says four of us are 16. Dad, did you know that? Oh, really? You've got to be a good father to your parents, to your children.

Train up your child the way he should go. And when he's old, he will not depart from it. Yeah.

We want our children to grow up and teach them the scriptures. Teach them the instruction of the Lord, fathers especially. Give them a picture Bible to read on their own and ask them questions.

Don't ask them complicated questions of the sovereignty of God and all that. Just ask them simple things like which they can understand. You know, who is Jesus' mother? Ask them easy things you can answer.

Who was Mary married to? Little things like that. And like that, go on to ask other things. You know how many books there are in the Bible? Things like that.

Stimulate an interest in them to study the scriptures, to know the scriptures. And then as they grow up, you can teach the principles of scripture. Why don't we cheat? Why don't we fight back with people who fight with us? So once we've got the family life, then we go to the third story, the church.

The church is God's ultimate purpose of his love for us as Jesus loved, as he loved Jesus, leading us to keep a good conscience, building a family. The ultimate goal is to build the church of Jesus Christ. That's why we concentrate so much on building the church.

And we don't want to build a church as a congregation. The same glory that is in the ground in the first story, second story, we want that glory to be in the church. That's why you have a responsibility to make sure the glory is in your personal life.

You have a responsibility to make sure the glory is in your family life. Then we all come together, glory will automatically be in the church. Because we are trained in our home.

Elders, the Bible says, elders are trained in their home. 1 Timothy 3, to bring up two or three children so that they can lead a church of 70, 80 people. But if they can't even bring up two, three children, how will they bring up 70, 80 people? So the training in the home, that's what 1 Timothy 3 says, by the way.

So the training in the home is a preparation for ministry in the church. That's exactly what it says. We experience the glory at home and then we can bring that glory into the church.

But if you don't have the glory at home, you're going to bring a theory to the church. Let's repent. You know the solution to everything is repentance.

There's a wonderful solution. Repent. Don't say but, there are reasons why.

The moment you justify yourself, Jesus said about the Pharisees, you are those who justify yourself. You are those who always find an excuse to prove that you are not at fault. There's a tremendous tendency to say that.

Well, Brother Zag, my children go astray because the world is like that, bad company and some children are like that. Of course, it's not my fault. No, no, no.

I'm perfect. Well, it'll never go well with your children. Till you humble yourself and say, that was my fault.

100%. I'm not going to, like Adam, blame Eve or blame the school or blame that person or blame that person. You'll ruin your children that way.

Go fall before God and say, Lord, my fault. Forgive me. What can I do now? And there will be a solution.

Do you know that there's not a single problem on earth for which you can say God has no solution? I don't care how serious your problem is. There's a solution with God. And that's how we're going to build the church.

And that's what we have found through 40 years of building this church. Do you know what all problems we have faced in this church? From the beginning only Ian and I know. Later on, some of the others present.

All types of problems, even in the construction of this building. Practical problems. So many problems.

But we believe that in every problem, there's a solution with God. If we need money, we don't ask for it. We never ask for money once, even when we built this building.

We never sent a letter asking people to give us money. No. Or any such hints or any such thing.

God's a solution with God. I don't know how he's going to do it, but he'll do it. And if he doesn't do something, we don't build the building.

Simple. We want to glorify God, that's all. We don't believe in buildings.

We believe in the family of God. So we want to build a church which is like a family which functions together, like the members of our body working together, cooperating with each other. Like we heard the other day, when one stretches, you know how there are muscles here on top of my arm and muscles underneath.

So now these muscles are going to pull, the muscles underneath saying, hey, great, I'm going to yield. Sure. You want to pull? I yield.

And then when they pull, this muscle says, you want to pull? Sure, I yield. What cooperation? And there's no noise also. You know, when you hear noise here, it's called arthritis.

And sometimes among some brothers, you hear a noise. There's a lot of arthritis in the church. We've got to get rid of it.

It says in Ephesians, I'm not joking. You read in Ephesians 4 about the joints. Have you heard about the joints in Ephesians 4? The problem in the joints is called arthritis.

Ephesians chapter 4 speaks about building the body. It says here, Ephesians 4 and verse 16, from Christ, the whole body is fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies. According to the proper working of each individual part causes the growth of the body in the building up of itself in love.

When you're working together with another brother, the most important picture you must keep in mind is this, in working with any brother or any sister, noiseless, arthritis-less fellowship, joints, that which every joint supplies. Look at the number of joints there are in your fingers. In one finger alone, one, two, three, all

of them work.

Do you hear any noise? That's how our fellowship must be in our church, working together, no competition. When it's not, I'm the senior brother, you better yield every time. You'll go around like this.

That's the problem in some churches. So what if you're the senior brother? Sometimes you have to yield. Sometimes he has to yield.

This is fellowship. This is between husband and wife, the same thing. Or give and take, as the world says.

What a great need there is, my brothers and sisters, for God Almighty, I'll conclude with this verse, to show the devil a church that functions like that. It says here in Ephesians 3, God wants to show his manifold wisdom to the rulers, that means the evil rulers in the heavenly places, the devil and his, it's called the spirit forces in heavenlies in chapter 6 and verse 12. The evil forces in the heavenly places is mentioned here in Ephesians 3.10, that God wants to show them through the church his wisdom.

God's wisdom is that which brings love and unity. And God says, hey Satan and all your demons, look at that church down there in that little village in India, or that little town in India. Go and look at that church, Satan.

You see my wisdom there? You see all those people are so different from each other? You see out there in the world, the Malayalees and Anglo-Indians never get together, never function with each other, and the Tamils and Telugu and others don't work together, and the Marathis and the Tamilians, they have nothing to do with each other, but go and see that church. And you see that other church, that's not a graduate's fellowship, that's a fellowship of graduates and illiterate people, all in one church, black and white and everything else. One church.

Go and see that church. You see my wisdom? That is what God is displaying through the church. He's showing off, just like he said about Job years ago.

Have you seen Job, Satan? Satan says about all these crooked people, hypocrites? Yes, but how about Job? And today when the devil says to God, look at all these preachers asking for money, begging for money, and swindling poor people. Yes, but have you seen that church? Look at all those churches full of disunity. Yes, but have you seen that one? That's what God is looking for.

I hope you have a burden in your locality to build a church like that, to build a family like that, to build a life like that. May God help us. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, please help each one of us to take heed to what we have heard today, that we shall preserve the glory generation after generation in our church. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

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