

The Danger of Money in Building the Church

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being gripped by the new covenant distinctives in our hearts, distinguishing between mere head knowledge and heart transformation. It challenges the audience to examine their reactions to spiritual truths and to ensure that they are truly experiencing a deep change within. The sermon also highlights the need to prioritize surrendering to God, seeking a pure offering, and serving God wholeheartedly without being entangled by the pursuit of wealth or worldly gain.

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Scripture: Matthew 6:24, Luke 14:26, Zechariah 14:21, Romans 13:8, Luke 16:13, 2 Corinthians 9:7, Luke 8:3, Acts 20:33, 1 Timothy 6:10

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Description

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Transcript

Talking about new covenant distinctives, it's important for us to be gripped by this in our heart. How do I know whether I got it only in my mind or in my heart? If your reaction in this past few sessions has been, well, I've heard that before. I'm pretty sure you got it only in your mind and you'll probably remain in your mind for the next 20 years unless you wake up.

The way you know it's come to your heart is, I saw my need there. I've seen both these reactions in many people. One is, oh, I've heard that before.

There are always, you know, there are people, we read in Acts 17 about a certain group of people in Athens and Paul went there. They always wanted to hear something new. And many of them never, I don't even know whether there were a church in Athens.

I can quite believe there'd be no church there because they're always wanting to hear something new. And I want to say to you, you're ready to hear something new when you're an evangelist. He kept on preaching, you must be born again until, he said, until you're born again, you're going to keep on hearing

me say that.

Charles Finney, who was another great evangelist, he said he's discovered through the years that you've got to tell a person something 10 times before he understands it. I would say the new covenant, maybe 25 times. And you know your grip with it when you experience it.

For example, when do you stop listening to you've got to overcome anger? When you've overcome it. Well, until then you've got to take it. It's like a doctor says, you're still sick.

You must keep on taking the medicine. You say, doc, when can I stop taking the medicine? Well, when you're healed, then you don't need the medicine anymore. I just mentioned that because thereby you can detect whether your reaction to the message is from your head or from the heart.

You remember the first two kings of Israel? One was Saul. It says when he stood in the crowd, his head was above everybody else's. He's a very tall man, around seven feet or so, perhaps.

It's mentioned there, his head was above everybody else's when he stood in a crowd and he lived by his head and he lost the kingdom. And then when God told him, I finished with you, he said to him through Samuel, I'm now searching for a man who's after my own heart. That is the difference.

Saul was a man of the head and David was a man of the heart. Never forget that. And I found Christians who go one of these two ways.

Those who go by the head, they never build a new covenant church. They never build a new covenant home. It's those who hear God in their heart and want to follow what he says.

I read, you see, those who have this head attitude of, I've already heard that before, they won't read the Bible too frequently because they say, I've already read it. It's like a novel, you know, they've already read it. Well, what is there they don't know.

But I'll tell you, I've read the Bible for 59 years nearly and I'm discovering new things now. I read paraphrases of the Bible so that I can get some more light on that. Think of that expression I mentioned yesterday from Isaiah 53, 8 in the paraphrase.

He had no thought for his own welfare and went to death. I said, Lord, can I follow you there? Human beings are so concerned always about their own welfare. Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.

I've discovered that if you really want to build a church, you have to forget about your own welfare. That's the way Jesus went. Many would like to build a church, but they don't want to pay the price.

And so if you go to the market and you want to buy something, the genuine article costs a lot of money. So I say, okay, we'll take a cheap counterfeit. Well, that won't last long.

And that's exactly what's happening with a lot of people who hear these things and they say, well, it's too much to pay such a big price, but can we get it cheaper? Yeah, the devil's got many versions that are cheaper, cheaper versions of building a church. We'll call it New Covenant Church. We'll call it with these fancy names and all that, but it won't be that.

So we've got to be very careful. When I started to work my own life and when God began a work in Bangalore, the word that the Lord gave my heart for myself, not for others, was John 12, 24. That if I, as a

single grain of wheat, fall into the earth and die, there'll be fruit.

But if it doesn't die, it'll remain alone. That's the word that the Lord said to his disciples. You know, these were, it says here, there were certain Greeks in John 12, 20, who came to worship at the feast and they were very eager to see Jesus.

In verse 21, they came to Philip and said, we'd like to see Jesus. And you know, all most famous people are very honored when people want to come and see them. Not Jesus, he couldn't care less for all that.

They came and told Jesus that some Greeks, Greeks, they're the greatest people, the most cultured people on earth. Some of them want to see you. It's like saying some very important people want to come and see you.

And Jesus never, I don't even know whether he met them. And I think what he was telling them was go and tell them. And I apply this verse 24 as an answer to that question.

Can we see Jesus? Yeah, you'll see him when you're willing to die to yourself. Verse 24, that was his answer to the people who wanted to see Jesus. If you fall into the ground and die, to all that you are, dead to the world and its applause, to all the customs and fashions and laws of those who hate the humbling cross, so dead that no desire will rise to appear good or great or wise in any but my savior's eyes.

That's a chorus I learned about 58 years ago. And I've sung it to myself hundreds and hundreds of times, even in the last few days. Dead to the world and its applause, to all the customs and fashions and laws of those who hate the humbling cross, so dead that no desire will rise to appear good or great or wise in any but my savior's eyes.

Even if you don't remember the verse, let that be the attitude of your heart. If I fall into the ground and die, I will bear fruit. Otherwise, you'll be like a beautiful grain of wheat kept in a glass case in the shelf.

50 years later, you'll be one grain of wheat. And I want to say to those of you who are lonely, this is the solution to loneliness. Fall into the ground and die, you'll never be alone.

When I started in Bangalore, I was alone. But I said, I don't want to be alone. It's inconvenient sometimes to fellowship.

It's more convenient to be alone. I use this illustration in, you know, the church is like a building. The Bible calls the church like a building.

And in India, we don't build with wooden frames, because we have a lot of termites and all that would eat them up in no time. So, buildings are all built with bricks. And so, when a person wants to build a building, he gets a truckload of bricks, 10,000 bricks come and drop there beside the construction site.

And little by little, the masons put those bricks together. Now, it's very inconvenient to have a brick on top of you and a brick underneath and a to the left and a brick to the right. And, you know, it's much easier if you're just lying in that pile of bricks, you can get up and walk off wherever you like.

But when someone's above you and underneath you, you're under authority and there are inconvenient people around you. But it's safe. In India, if you don't build that building quickly with that pile of bricks, you'll find little by little, the number disappears.

It's one of those magic things that happens in India, because somebody else is building a house, a couple of streets down the road, and he needs bricks too. But once you put it in the building, he can't take it away. And I often think of the devil.

He comes and picks up these individual bricks who don't want to be a part of built into a building. They like to be alone. They like to have that little freedom to walk off on their own wherever they like.

We don't like to be under any authority. I'll tell you something, you'll never, never in your life build a New Covenant Church or be a part of one if you have not learned to be under authority. Jesus was under the authority of his father.

And right from day one, when he came to earth, the father put him under the authority of Joseph and Mary. Imperfect authority. Many of us complain that the authority is imperfect.

Well, you have to first of all ask yourself, did God place you there? If you're in a church, which God didn't place you there, you were just born into it because your parents were there or your grandparents were there or through the circumstances you landed up in that church, then God hasn't placed you there. Then you can walk out of that church any day. In fact, if that church is not teaching the truth, you should walk out of it.

I walked out of many churches because I found that they were not teaching the whole counsel of God. And somebody once told me, Brother Zach, you seem to be a very unstable person. You left this church and then you went to another one, another one.

I said, I've been unstable all my life. I left first grade and I went to second grade and I left second grade and went to third grade. I mean, it started when I was very young.

It's not later on this instability arose. I was not like those rock steady people who stayed 25 years in first grade. I'm sorry.

I didn't want that. If I found that something was not teaching the whole counsel of God, I'd move on. And that's why I am where I am today.

Extremely happy. Paul said, I proclaim the whole counsel of God. I will not hold back anything from you.

That's how he built his churches. But once Paul left, people began to compromise and they felt we lose members if we proclaim the whole counsel of God. Let's keep people happy.

I tell you today we have a Christendom where the leaders are trying to keep people happy. If they want all the style of the rock music stars, let's have it in the church. Let's call it Christian rock.

It's like Christian adultery or Christian murder or something like that. I don't understand what Christian rock is. Let's get that so that people will come in.

And what type of people come in? Not people who want to be disciples of Jesus. No. People who like your music.

I prayed many times for ourselves in our church in Bangalore. Lord, I don't want a single person to come to our church because they like our music or because they like our building or even because they like the eloquence of the preacher. Even that doesn't make you spiritual.

A lot of people, I know a lot of people listen to me because it's pleasant to their ears, but that doesn't make them spiritual. And I'm not fooled by a lot of people who say, oh Brother Zach, I hear you on YouTube regularly. There was a brother who said he hears me every day.

I said really? 365 days a year? He said yes. But I don't find him interested in building a new covenant church. You know there's a verse I want to show you in the book of Ezekiel chapter 33.

Many, many years ago when I found this, a lot of people like to listen to me because of my manner of speaking. They were not interested in being spiritual. They just liked a nice, pleasant intellectual presentation of truth.

I was very concerned about this. But what can I do? I can only speak the way I am, the way God's made me. I can't preach like somebody else.

But Ezekiel chapter 33, sorry, As for you, son of man, your fellow citizens who talk about you by the walls and in the doorways of the houses speak to one another, each to his brother saying, come, now hear what the message is which comes forth from the Lord. They come to you as people come and sit before you as my people and hear your words, but they don't do them. For they do the lustful desires expressed by their mouth and their heart goes after their profit making and money making game.

And you are to them like a sensual song, like a lovely music by one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument. They hear your words, but they do not practice them. And so when it comes to pass, as it surely will, then they will know that a prophet was in their midst.

The Lord spoke to me that many, many years ago and comforted me saying that Ezekiel faced the same thing and many other prophets too. And the prophets always had one burden because that is the burden of the Lord for that time. If you read some of the first lines of some of the prophets, it begins like this, the burden of the word of the Lord, the burden of the word of the Lord.

They were not professional preachers. They lived before God's face and they got a burden in their heart. And the burden was related to the need among the people of Israel at that particular time.

And it was not always the same. The need was one in Isaiah's time. For example, Isaiah turns around to the Israelites in his time and says, you people who are like Sodom and Gomorrah, imagine calling people like that.

That was his burden. And he preached like that. And we read later on that they sawed Isaiah into pieces.

That's how they killed him. With a saw, they sawed him into pieces. And I'm not surprised.

You read about it in Hebrews 11 of people who were sawn asunder. And Jeremiah had his burden for 40 years. He had one burden.

I want to prevent Israel from going from Judah rather to go into Babylon, just like the Northern Kingdom Israel went into Assyria captivity. I don't want this nation to go into Babylon. And from a very young age, he was probably about 20 years old or something.

When he started preaching for 40 years, he preached the same message continuously. They didn't like it, but there was one young man called Daniel who listened to him and he was gripped. So it was worth it that Jeremiah preached for one man, Daniel.

And he went into Babylon and became a fiery witness for two separate kingdoms, for the Babylonian kingdom and even the Medo-Persian kingdom that came later on. So Jeremiah accomplished something in one person and threw him in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, three others. So there is a remnant, I believe even today.

And Jeremiah preached to protect people from going into Babylon. And I find that's the burden God's given us to save people from the Babylon there is in Christendom today. The fundamental principle of Babylon is centered around money.

Jerusalem is centered around God. Babylon is a place of business. And the principle of business is spend as little as you can and gain as much as you can.

Go to a church and give as little as you can, but get as much as you can. Get as much spiritual profit as you can, but give as little as you can. That's business.

And anyone with that mentality is a part of Babylon, even if he sits in one of my churches. That's the spirit of Babylon. Babylon is not a system in one particular denomination.

It's a system that can enter anybody sitting in any church, where the principle is, you give as little as you can and get as much as you can. That's not how Jesus came to the earth. He gave everything.

As I said, as we read that verse, he had no thought for his own welfare when he died. He gave himself. Christ loved the church and he gave himself completely for it.

That's how he built the church. And today I find there are people who hear the message who want to build the church without giving themselves completely. They've got their own private agenda.

They want to make some profit here. They want to get a name here or something there. They want to get some honor or some money or something.

They'll never build a church, not in a thousand years. They'll talk theories, but go and see what they have done. Have they made disciples where they are? No.

Jesus called us to make disciples. Numbers are no problem. You can build a massive structure with wood, hay, and straw.

If somebody gives you a thousand dollars and says, go and buy some gold, silver, and precious stones or go and buy some wood, hay, and straw, you can get a huge amount of wood, hay, and straw with a thousand dollars. You probably get a handful of gold and silver and precious stones. That's the difference.

So that is what's going to last when you put it all into the fires. Finally, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 3, God will put it all into the fire. This gold, silver, and precious stones, this little thing in your hand will remain for all eternity.

And that massive megachurch will be burnt up completely. And those who have eyes to see it and ears to hear will realize it today. I mentioned this many times when I speak that I've said to the Lord, Lord, don't tell me something on the judgment seat of at your judgment seat that you haven't told me earlier today, earlier now on earth.

I don't want to discover anything at the judgment seat of Christ that I should have known while I was alive on earth. Because that'll be a surprise. For example, I spoke yesterday about the importance of forgiving others.

And then Jesus said very clearly in Matthew 5, 16, if you don't forgive others, your heavenly father will not forgive you. It's crystal clear that if you don't forgive others, you will not be forgiven. That's why I spoke so strongly about it yesterday.

Because there are Christians who haven't forgiven others. Well, I want to tell you, if you die like that, you will definitely go to hell. I don't care if you've been a believer 40 years or 50 years, whether you speak in tongues, whether you saw healing of the sick.

If you haven't forgiven others, God will not forgive you. Then I asked the question, do you think there are people in heaven who are not forgiven? You think there's even one person in heaven who has not forgiven one sin? He committed a million, most of them were forgiven, but one was not forgiven. You think such a man can enter heaven? Tell me honestly, no sin can enter into God's presence.

What happens if you don't forgive somebody and God says, I won't forgive you? So what if you lived 50 years with your sins forgiven, but you died without forgiving somebody? I have not the slightest doubt in my mind that you will go to hell because I believe that heaven and earth will pass away, but Jesus' words will not pass away. But if you are sincere, God will help you to hear that message before you die. Let me tell you about a man who came to our church in 1980, which is way back, what's it, 38 years ago.

He was a very famous evangelist. I mean, we were a small little unknown group and I wondered why this very famous evangelist landed up in our church to our meeting. He said, Brother Zak, I have heard something about what you're sharing and I feel God told me to come here.

He was a very good musician. He had played before the Queen of England and all. And when he came to our conference, I said, why don't you play your accordion here? He said, no, I haven't come here to play music.

I've come here to listen to you. And he heard me preach. If you don't forgive others, you will not be forgiven.

Two years later, he was dying. He was young in his fifties and in his deathbed, he sent for me. And he told me, he said, Brother Zak, I just want to tell you one thing.

When I came to your church two years ago, I was full of bitterness against so many pastors who had told lies about me and spread scandals about me, which are completely false. I had not forgiven them. And I never in any church did I hear that that was a serious matter.

They felt I was justified in having that attitude towards those people. But I heard in your church that if I don't forgive others, I won't be forgiven. And I tell you, I want to tell you, I took it seriously here.

I'm on my deathbed now. I don't know how much longer I have, but I want to tell you, I've forgiven every one of them and I'm ready to meet my Savior. Then I realized that though he was a famous evangelist, he was on his way to hell.

But God saw the man was sincere and brought him to us to hear one truth that he needed to, not to build a new covenant church, but how to get to heaven. There is no forgiveness once you leave this earth. It's appointed unto man once to die and after this, the judgment.

So if you die without forgiving somebody, you really believe there's going to be another chance God is going to give you to forgive someone? That's Roman Catholic teaching, that there's a purgatory where you'll get a chance again to forgive that person. No, there isn't. It's appointed unto men once to die and after that, the judgment.

And if you don't forgive people now, you will not be forgiven. Now, this was not the standard in the Old Testament. To whom more is given, more is required.

In the Old Testament, you avoided adultery. In the New Testament, you avoid lusting after women. In the Old Testament, you avoid murder.

In the Old Testament, you avoid anger. The standards are much higher. And if you read the first book of Kings, the last days of David in chapter one and chapter two, you'll find that he died without forgiving some people.

David, the man after God's own heart, after he wrote Psalm 51, he told Solomon, that guy Shimei, he cursed me when I was being chased out by my son Absalom. But afterwards, I forgave him and I told him I wouldn't shed his blood. But Solomon, you didn't make that promise.

Make sure you kill him, that his gray hair goes down with blood to the grave. And the next verse is David died. Is he in heaven? Read that passage, first two chapters of 1 Kings.

I believe he is. He was under the Old Covenant. We're not.

To be in this day and age we live, to whom more is given, more is required. I'm telling you things which are in the Bible, but which nobody will tell you, or you probably never heard. A lot of people have told me that.

Brother Zach, you give us a new Bible. The same Bible, but we never saw these verses. They were there.

It is God's will to plant local churches in different parts of the world. When Malachi prophesied, it was the end of the Jewish age, and God was fed up with the failure of the Jews. I mean, many times through many prophets, he had warned them.

And they still, they would respond in the days of Haggai and Zechariah. They responded so well and came back and built the temple. But just about a hundred years later, they had backslidden again.

It's a tendency in God's people to be stirred up by a prophet, to temporarily rise up to height and then sink down again. And Malachi came along as a prophet, and he was the last one. God said, he's not going to speak any more to these people.

And he told them, you guys think that, let me paraphrase what Malachi said from God, you Israelites think that you are the only people I care for. But I'm pretty fed up with all of you. I've given up on you.

From now on, Malachi 1:11, from the rising of the sun, that is the East, all the way to the West, to its setting, my name will be great among the nations. And even though you people don't know how to offer a pure offering to me, I'm going to get a pure offering from every nation of the earth. And those are people

who are born again, who become disciples.

That's the pure offering God's looking for, who form local churches from the East to the West. And my name will be great among the nations. In 1975, August, I remember the date, 17th of August, 1975, when we started our church, started means what? There were two families.

We started meeting together. Some others would come and go and come and go. But over the years, God had a plan, which we never knew then.

This is the verse the Lord gave us at that time. I want a pure offering, one that's free from self. Self is what pollutes the offering.

The Lord said, I want an offering here that's pure, a church that's free from self, not just free from telling lies and free from giving bribes and freeing things, not just free from all these external things, which even worldly people know but free from self, free from pride and arrogance and selfishness. I want a pure offering. And for that, he said, you must be willing to sacrifice.

Because these people, by the time it came to that time of Malachi, Israelites were still going through the form. You know, we read in 2nd Timothy 3 about the last days, it'll be difficult to be a Christian, not because there's persecution, but because of the people who have a form of godliness without the power, and you'll be living in the midst of such people, and you won't know who is genuine here. They all seem to have the right form, the right language, but some have the real power of discipleship, and some don't.

I find that is the biggest danger in our time, even in our churches. There are people sitting with the form of godliness who speak the right language, but they're not disciples in their daily life. They're not willing to fall into the ground and die.

They want to preserve their self-life, have the right language, understand the right doctrine, and be a part of a good church. I've seen that happen in India, and I'm fighting against it all the time, and I'll fight against it until I die. I've been challenged reading the biography of William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, who did a tremendous work among the prostitutes and child labor that was going on in England in the 19th century, and when he was over 80 years old, weak old man, he said, as long as people are exploiting innocent young girls, as long as people are making poor little children work for no pay, I will fight.

I will fight till my last breath, and he did that. I've often thought of those words. His commission was to work among such people.

My commission the Lord gave me was to build new covenant churches, and I say I'm going to do that till I die, or till the Lord comes, which I hope is earlier, and I find that Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, and I want to say to all of you, if you're really serious about giving that pure offering to God in the town where you live, you've got to give yourself completely, and to give that self is the most difficult thing. You can give money. It doesn't cost much.

You can go to meetings. It doesn't cost much, but to give yourself, then the church will be built. The grain of wheat has to fall into the ground and die being trampled down by others, break open, crack open, and from there comes forth a life, and there'll be hundreds of grains.

It's an amazing thing in nature. The farmers know it. You put one seed and hundreds come out of it, and wherever God sees one man who's willing to fall into the ground and die, there'll be fruit in your place.

There's no respect of persons with God. There's no partiality. He doesn't see your intellectual level or anything, not even your knowledge of the Bible.

No, that's, if God calls you to be a teacher, you don't need to know the Bible, but you can build the New Covenant Church without having the knowledge of the scripture that I have, but you've got to fall into the ground and die. That's the condition, and so here these people, it says here, they were offering offerings to God in Malachi chapter 1, and what were they offering? They were defiling the Lord's table in verse 8 by presenting the blind for sacrifice, chapter 1 verse 8 of Malachi. They were offering the lame and the sick.

They were keeping the letter of the law, which said you must offer a sheep or a goat, but they looked around their flock and they found, oh, we are sick and tired of this blind sheep. It's a bit of a nuisance to us, and this lame bullock, before it dies, let's offer it to the Lord. So they're offering the things that cost them nothing.

That's why they couldn't build the church. You ask yourself, my brother, sister, you have so much desire to go on to higher things, and that's why you've come here to this conference. How much are you willing to pay? I'm not talking about money.

Don't misunderstand me. I've never told people to give money. I'll tell you why, because Jesus never told.

Jesus said give money to the poor. That I've done. I preached it, and we've given literally millions of rupees to poor believers in India, to their sick, or they educate their children, etc.

That we keep doing, but otherwise I never talk about it. Paul never talked about it. Jesus never talked about it, and those are my examples, not today's preachers.

So when I say how much are you willing to give, you know what is the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament type? It's in Romans 12, in verse 2, 1 and 2. Present your body, Romans 12, 1, a living sacrifice to God. In the Old Testament, it was present your tithe as a sacrifice to God. In Romans 12, 1, it is present your body, a living sacrifice to God, and your mind.

Don't let your mind be conformed, verse 2, to the ideas of this world, but be transformed into the likeness of Christ, so that you can understand the perfect will of God. Romans 12, 1 and 2 is what I'm talking about. Are you willing to give that? It's like, which is easier to give? Ten percent of your income or your eyes? Present your body means, you know, in the Old Testament, they had to cut the bullock into pieces before they laid it on the altar.

And I wonder why in the world did they cut it? They're going to burn it up in any case. Why take the trouble of cutting it at all? But I discovered the reason is because it had a New Testament application. That burnt offering in the Old Testament was a picture of the New Testament believer giving his body, and that body has to be cut up and presented on the altar.

First, the eyes. Are you willing to say, Lord, let's go one month at a time. Throughout this month, every single day, I never want to use my eyes to read anything which will dishonor you, or to look at anything that will dishonor you, or spend my looking eyes wasting a lot of time on Facebook and the internet when I don't have enough time to use those same eyes to read the Word of God.

Do you know the number of people today who claim to be believers who spend more time on Facebook than with the Bible? Very subtle. The devil's very clever. If he sees that he can't lead you to pornography, he'll lead you to something which is not profitable for eternity.

Now, if you had lots and lots of time, then Jesus is going to come only after another 10,000 years, and you're going to live 10,000 years. Okay, spend a little time on Facebook. But Jesus is not coming after 10,000 years.

He's coming pretty soon. The time is short. You need to know the Word of God.

You need to hear what God is saying to you to build that pure offering for Him. I'm not against Facebook. I'm not against going to the internet or watching the news.

I watch the news every day because I want to know what's happening in the world. I see that Jesus once knew that a tower of Siloam fell and killed 12 people. How did He know about that? He kept in touch with the local news.

And so, I knew when the tower fell in New York, and I believe Jesus would have known about it. So, I believe in being updated with the news, but not being so crazy that I don't have time for anything else. No, the Bible is always number one.

God is number one. The Bible begins with these words, in the beginning God. In the beginning Word, the first four words in the Bible, in the beginning God.

And that must be how it is in our life and in our daily routine. Always God first. Well, these people were not like that.

They would put that which didn't cost them anything. And the Lord said, I'm sick and tired of you. And whenever God sees a denomination or a church offering things which don't cost them anything, God gives up on them.

God's given up on a lot of churches. You read that in Revelation chapter 2 and 3, how even in the churches planted by the apostles just 50 years earlier, God gave up on them. You think God hasn't given up on multitudes of churches today that call themselves mega churches, evangelical churches, fundamental churches, etc., and given up on them.

You've got to be very, very careful. If we don't live up to the standards that Jesus preached in the New Testament, the church will be destroyed. One of the things we spent a lot of time teaching in the early days when we started our work, basically two passages of scripture we spent a lot of time on.

The first was, you know, a discipleship, the first subject, because there are two great commissions. One is in Mark 16 where Jesus said, go into all the world and preach the gospel to everyone and lay hands on the sick and they'll be healed, etc. There, it was proclaiming the gospel to unreached areas.

That is one part of the great commission. And wherever the gospel goes to unreached areas, even today, God confirms the word with healing. It happens in India too, casting out demons, regular feature, wherever the gospel goes for the first time.

The other part of the great commission is in Matthew 28, the last three verses of Matthew 28. Make disciples in every nation. And there, the emphasis is not on healing or casting out demons.

They're not even mentioned there. There, it is teach them to do everything that I commanded you. You see, these are the two great commissions.

Just see it very clearly. When you're going to unreached areas where the gospel is never gone, preach the gospel. Tell them Jesus died for their sins.

Tell them they're sinners. And God says, I'll confirm the word with signs following. But when you come into the midst of people who have already accepted the Lord, or in areas where Christianity has already come, there you need to make disciples.

And that's why you don't see so many healings, except these fake healings they show on television. You don't see so much here. But if you want to see healing, I'll tell you, go into the unreached areas where the gospel is being preached.

Even in India or anywhere, you'll see healing taking place, casting out demons. We've seen it. Because there's so many demon-possessed people among the non-Christians.

They don't need counseling. Counseling won't help them in a hundred years. They need deliverance.

So God does that. But when it comes to building the church, we have to make disciples. And so we had to teach everyone.

They were born again, but they were not disciples when they came to us. The conditions of discipleship that Jesus proclaimed in Luke 14. And they were basically three.

Luke 14, 26, 27, and 33. Number one, you've got to love Jesus more than your father, mother, brother, sister, all your loved ones. The whole list of them said, I love Jesus more than all of them.

I'm not going to let any of them influence me in the way I'm to follow the Lord. If mommy cries because I'm doing something for the Lord, I say she can cry as much as she likes. I'm going to follow the Lord.

And I'm not going to listen to my dad. I'll respect my dad till the end of my life, but I'm not going to listen to him if the Lord tells me to do something else. That's the number one condition of discipleship.

That Jesus means more to you than your wife. If you're so much in love with your wife that you will disobey God, you're not a disciple. You remember when Job was going through all the trials and he said, I still worship God.

And his wife said, what a fool you are. Why don't you commit suicide? He said, don't speak like a foolish woman. Now, I'm not saying to talk to your wife like that.

We are Christians, so we speak in a much gentler way. But he didn't allow his wife to influence his walk with God. And Jesus said, there's not a man on earth like Job at that time.

And Jesus made it very clear. God must be number one in your life. Not your wife, not your husband, not your father, mother, brother, sister, anything.

I told my wife before I got married to her, you've always got to be number two and I must be number two in your life. Christ must be first. Otherwise, we will never have a happy marriage.

And that's how we decided all these years. So that's number one. Nobody, not even your children, sometimes your children can become more important to you than the Lord.

And that's how so many children go astray. Parents love their children more than they love Jesus and allow their children to do so many things and go in certain ways which are completely against scripture. No wonder years later they have heartaches because they allowed the children to go astray when they were young.

Because they didn't, they were not disciples. They didn't put Jesus first in their life. So I'm not saying that to condemn anybody.

If you repent, God can still do something for you. But that's the first condition of discipleship. You've got to maintain it persistently.

Nobody, I mean, I work with about 140 elders in different churches, in all our churches, in different places. Not one of them is more important to me than Jesus Christ. And the proof of that is if I see something wrong there, I'll tell them, even if he's my closest co-worker.

Jesus turned around to Peter and said, get behind me, Satan. You're interested in the things of man, not the things of God. And I believe that we must have such a relationship, even with our fellow elders, where we can speak the truth.

There's so many diplomats among Christian leaders. Oh, I better not say anything there. He's my co-worker, so I don't want to offend him.

What are you building? Are you building a club where you diplomatically speak to one another or the Church of Jesus Christ? You cannot love even your brother in the church more than Christ if you want to be a disciple. These are simple principles. If you don't follow that, I can give it in writing to you.

You'll never build a new covenant church, not in a hundred years. Insist on total discipleship, where Christ is number one more than any human being. And then number two, verse 27, that you love Jesus more than your own self, which I've spoken about yesterday and today.

Self. You remember what the devil told God about Job. Okay, God, you've taken away his children, he's still worshipping you.

You've taken away his property, he's still worshipping you. But I'll tell you something, God. This is what the devil told Job, told God.

There's nothing that a man loves like himself. The devil had analysed man for years, and he said the truth. There's nothing that a man loves like himself.

He'll sacrifice his wife, children, job, business, everything but his self. It's true. So you can't be a disciple if you keep that self on the throne.

If you don't let Christ displace self from the throne and say, no longer my interest in myself. Like I said yesterday, Jesus walked the way where he didn't think of his own welfare. He thought, I've got to do the work of my heavenly father, and that's how he built a church.

That's what it means to follow Jesus, and not just a question of singing songs in the church saying, follow, follow, I'll follow anywhere, and going and keeping self on your throne. That's not discipleship. And number three is verse 33.

You've got to love Jesus more than your possessions. Christ is above your possessions. Not only that you don't cheat or tell lies, not only that you will stay out of debt.

This is another thing I noticed. There are many believers who don't think it is a sin to be in debt. You don't believe it's a sin? Do you believe it's a sin to disobey God's word? Or you don't even believe that? I don't know.

Let me read you a command of the Holy Spirit in scripture. Romans 13 and verse 8. Owe nothing to anyone. If you do owe anything to anyone, it must be love.

Love you must owe to everybody. But other than love, Romans 13, 8, owe nothing. Is there an allowance there? Do you take it seriously? Where you're in debt.

Now, I'm not talking about a house mortgage, because that's not a debt. Because on that one side of the balance, you've got to pay the housing. The other side, you've got the money.

If you took as a loan from a bank, that's equal. There's no debt there. If you die, the bank takes the house.

There's no debt. Or you bought a car and insured it on a loan. Well, that's no debt there.

But I'm talking about money for which there's no collateral, nothing there on the other side to show for it. That's a debt. Something you buy with a credit card because you don't want to wait till you accumulate that money and buy it.

You want to buy it in advance. And you're in debt. You can't sell that thing you bought because its value has dropped considerably as soon as you buy it.

It's secondhand. And there are Christians who accumulate credit card debt like that. It's an absolute shame.

Somebody told me that 95% of people in America have credit card debt. Aren't some of them believers? Have they read Romans 13, 8? Or they said, ah, who cares for that? No wonder your spiritual life is so shallow, empty. It'll never get better no matter how many conferences you attend.

Dear brothers and sisters, take it seriously. I am 78 and a half years old today. I have never been in debt for one cent to anybody in my whole life.

My wife and I were rock bottom poor when we were married. I'd given up my job in the Navy, given up all my money, emptied my bank account and given it for God's work. And I had nothing.

And we struggled and struggled and struggled for years before we got enough to live a little comfortably. But even in those days, we never bought new clothes. We couldn't afford it.

We just lived with what we had. If something got torn, we just stitched it up and wore it again. I'm telling you the truth.

And God was testing us those days. Will you obey my word which says, oh, no, man, anything? I said, yes, Lord. It doesn't matter if my shirts and pants or the trousers are stitched up a little bit, doesn't look so grand as the new ones or what.

But I want to obey your word. That's more important to me. You take God seriously like that, I'll tell you, he'll do miracles in your life.

There's no partiality with God. All are the same. But he watches throughout the world to see who takes my word seriously, who obeys it down to the little letter.

These are the things by which we build the church. You have to pay a price. Lord, I will not use my eyes to look at anything that will hurt you.

My tongue, Lord, I put it on the altar. I never want to use my tongue. I used it for a lot of things for myself in the past.

But I don't want to say anything that will hurt another person unless it is for the word of God's sake. And I don't want to say whatever comes to my mind, passing judgment on all type of people, all the gossip that goes on among Christians around the world. You know, there are two types of sins you read in Genesis 3 and Genesis 4. I call them the Genesis 3 sin and the Genesis 4 sin.

When Adam sinned, do you know that God never cursed him? You read Genesis 3, he cursed the earth, but he didn't curse Adam. Adam and Eve were not cursed. The Genesis 4, when Cain sinned, he said, Cain, you are cursed.

The first man that was cursed was not Adam or Eve. It was Cain. And I read that many times before I stopped to think.

Like I told you, you know, you come to a verse and you say, why did that happen? I never asked that question for many years. When I asked that question, I discovered something. And I discovered that Adam and Eve, with their sin, they hurt only themselves.

But Cain hurt somebody else with his sin. When you hurt only yourself, that's not so, it's a sin, but it's not as serious as a sin which hurts another person. Okay, now let me ask you a question.

Keeping in mind these two types of sins, which is worse, getting drunk or gossiping about somebody? Think about it. You don't need to think much. If you get drunk, so long as you keep to yourself and don't drive a car, you don't hurt anyone.

You get drunk, go into your bed and vomit and that's it. But when you gossip about someone and tell stories about someone to drag somebody down, you're hurting. That's a Genesis 4 sin.

That's a curse on it. The other is also a sin, but it's not as bad. But tell me how many preachers have told you that gossiping is worse than getting drunk? If a man gets drunk and comes to your church, what did the pastor tell him? But if the pastor knows that he gossips and comes to church, what did the pastor tell him? This is the ignorance in Christendom today, of what God considers to be sin, serious sins.

Not all sins are the same. So keep that in mind. And the other issue is, you know, I said eyes and tongue are just two parts of our body.

Isn't it easier to just give 10% to God than say, I'll give my eyes every day of this month to you. I'll give my tongue every single day of this month to you. Much easier.

Oh, Lord, here's your 10%. Don't disturb me. Let me take care of my body.

New covenant distinctives. The old covenant, you could give your tithe to God and you could give it grudgingly also. There was no command you must come and cheerfully give your tithe.

No such command. You can come and dump that sheep and the grain in front of the Levites and say, okay, here's your 10%. Take it.

God wants it. Have it. I don't feel like giving it, but here it is.

He had obeyed the command of God, you know. There was no disobedience in saying, I don't feel like giving it, but I still give it. But in the new covenant, second Corinthians nine, seven says, God loves a cheerful giver.

In the old Testament, the emphasis was on how much you gave. In the new Testament, the emphasis is on how you give, not how much. Cheerfully.

And only if you feel like giving. And if you're in debt to some man, give him that money. Render to Caesar what is Caesar's first and then give to God what is God's.

Jesus said that. So it's very important to see how this paying the tithe is the way people escape out of paying, giving their bodies, which is the real thing God wants. So my question was there in the beginning, how much of you, how many of you are willing to give everything to build a church? Seriously, are you happy with the substandard thing which you call a church where you are? Or do you have a burden like Jesus had for a pure offering? I had a burden in my heart for 10 years before I really saw the beginnings of a new covenant church for 10 years.

And during those 10 years, I produced a few ishmaels, which I had to get rid of till God finally brought in Isaac. If you're serious, my brother, sister, let me tell you this with all my heart. There's no partiality with God.

If God says, I want a pure offering from east to west in every place, why not your place? Your place is also there somewhere between the east and the west and God will build a church in your place. But I want to say one more thing in that connection. In Luke 16, Jesus said, to build the church, God must be your master, absolute master.

That's what it means to be a disciple. So we taught discipleship and we also taught the Sermon on the Mount, because that's how the churches are built, you know, built on the rock that will unshaken. But in Luke 16, Jesus said, when we serve God, there are possibility of serving two masters simultaneously, and it doesn't work.

Luke 16, 13, no servant can serve two masters, because he will hate the one and love the other or love to be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. So God and money are the two great masters demanding your service, even in the church.

And when I look around Christendom today, I find money has taken over. The preachers are more interested in getting money from people than in seeing that the people live a godly life. A lot of the

sermons that are being preached in many places today is to collect money from people, not to lead them to a godly life.

So money has taken over, and Jesus made it very clear, you cannot serve God and money. When Jesus preached, did he ever ask anybody for money after that? No. We read in Luke 8, verse 3, that some rich people gave Jesus money, he took it.

But he never asked anyone for it. Naturally, he needed money because he had, including himself, 13 people to feed, his 12 disciples, and many of them had families who had given up their jobs as fishermen. We are there to send money back home.

He certainly needed money, plenty of money. I mean, if you've got 13 people, but some of them had married families to feed, take care of, and pay house rent and all that, you certainly need a lot of money. And if you're going around with a band of preachers like that, where's the money going to come from? He never asked for money.

He never gave even a hint there was any need for money. Never in any meeting did Jesus ask for money, not even after he healed thousands. What an opportunity after healing thousands to say, let's take an offering now.

It'd be a massive offering at the end of people being healed. It's not like today's healing meetings. In today's healing meetings, I've noticed in India, we have a lot of them with American evangelists who come to India.

They always take the offering before the healing. I mean, prayer for healing. Because after the prayer for healing, when hardly anybody's healed, the offerings will be less.

And they are shrewd psychologists. Take the offering with promising healing, collect all your money, and then pray. Doesn't matter if they're not healed, we got the money.

People are serving money today. And I'm surprised, not at them, I'm surprised more at the thousands of foolish believers who go and give their money in these offering bags. You know, many people, the lead Christian leaders in Bangalore all know me.

And in the early days, when they had these healing meetings, and they wanted all the Christian leaders in Bangalore to sit on the platform, I'd get an invitation. And I say, no, I won't come. First of all, I have no interest in sitting on a platform.

I'm with the people. Secondly, I said, I will not join you for these so-called healing meetings, because I've seen from the past, not even 1% of people are healed. It's a deception to say that we're healing people.

That's number one. And secondly, because the way you collect money there, all these 25,000 people come to the meeting, and most of them unconverted, because they've got sick people in their families. And you go around with an offering bag first.

And here's this non-Christian man who brings his paralyzed wife on a stretcher there. And his non-Christian religion teaches him to give money to God, then your wife will be healed. And you come with the offering bag, and he puts a huge amount of money, 5,000 rupees into that offering bag.

And his wife is not healed. I said, if I go to a store, and I buy a DVD player or something there from a non-Christian storekeeper, and I come home and it doesn't work, I can take it back next day. That non-Christian storekeeper will give me back my money, because it doesn't work.

What about you? I asked them. You say you'll pray for healing. That guy puts 5,000 rupees in the bag, and his wife is not healed.

He comes back tomorrow and asks for the 5,000 rupees back. Will you give it to him? No. You're a crook.

That non-Christian storekeeper is better than you. I said, that's why I will not come and join you, folks, when you do this type of foolishness and dishonor to the name of Jesus Christ on this big arena here in India. I will not support it.

So this is what's happening in Christendom all over. Money has taken over. And unless we have a right attitude to money, you cannot build a local church.

In the book of Zechariah, there's a lovely verse. It's the last verse of Zechariah, which says, in the final day when God completes the work, the last sentence in the book of Zechariah is, in the margin of my Bible, says, there will not be any businessman in the house of God in that day. There will not be any merchant, person doing business in the house of God.

In the margin, it says that. In some translations, it says Canaanite. There will not be a businessman in the house of God in that day.

There are lots of them today. A lot of people who preach for money. So when we understood this way back in the beginning in 1975, we made a policy in our church that we would never pay a salary to any elder or any worker, any preacher.

That's how we worked. I mean, I worked in my church 43 years, never taken one cent. And we have 140 elders.

None of them take one cent from their church. They preach God's Word. They're elders.

They lead the church. And I would never invite a person to speak in my church who's a paid worker. Jesus never paid his apostles.

He never promised them a salary. He said, come and follow me and die to yourself. You'll see fruit in your life.

If you want to make money, go and go to the business world. But don't bring that spirit into the church. Don't mix God and money.

There are two masters. And you have to make a decision whom you choose. And the other decision we made was because we saw so many people from India, particularly, always writing to foreign countries like America and Germany and all that, asking people for money.

We're doing a work, and here we have so many thousands are being converted. All lies. And we're building a hall, and now we need to put a roof.

Can you send us money? All this rubbish. I never see Paul doing it. Paul did a far greater work than anybody else.

I never see one single time he's sending letters like that. When did Paul send a prayer letter asking for money? When did Paul send a prayer letter telling all these people about all the works that he did? Not even one. Where has Christendom learned it from? From the corporations.

They have a financial statement at the end of the year to show whether they made profit or not. Not Paul. His list was very different.

He was persecuted, imprisoned, beaten, etc. That was his list at the end of the year. Not how much money he made.

You see how Christendom has drifted so far away, but hardly anybody sees it. It's very, very important to see this difference. And so the other thing we decided, because of the scandal of people always collecting money and the non-Christian.

India, by the way, is 98% non-Christian. Their accusation is, you guys do this for money. We can stand up to them and say, no, we don't.

I don't get a single cent. I do it because I love Jesus. He died for me.

A lot of other Christian preachers can't say that to those non-Christians when they accuse them saying you're doing it for money. And so we decided that in all of our churches, we'd never take an offering. We'd never pass an offering bag around.

Never. And we've never done it in all these 43 years, in all our 70 or more churches. We do what we see in the Bible, that Jesus sat next to the offering box where a widow went and put her mite.

So we keep an offering box. We follow scripture. Those who want to put, put.

Those who don't want to put, don't put. But it's between you and God. Give cheerfully, give secretly.

We decided we want to build a new covenant church and new covenant principles. It's very, very important. Fall into the ground and die to self and take a radical attitude towards money in your personal life, in your family life, and in your church.

And never, never serve God for money or for honor or any gain for yourself. Let all the gain go to the Lord. Zero for yourself.

And when it is like that, I believe the Lord can build new covenant churches anywhere. That's great. Heavenly Father, please help us.

I believe with all my heart that in all the places where they are represented by the brothers and sisters sitting here, people have taken all the trouble to come all the way here at tremendous expense and cost to fly here, to drive here, to live here these couple of days. We believe they are sincere. Please encourage them to believe that you will build a church where they live and do a work, Lord, that will be a testimony for you in many parts of this land.

Pray in Jesus name. I want to say one final word. Here are two little books that were written in the last one year.

One is a commentary that goes through the Bible. It's very different from other commentaries because it's written from a new covenant perspective. And it's a more life application commentary, which is a message for today from every book of the Bible as a result of 50 years of my Bible study.

And I have encouraged everyone in our church in India to buy a copy and read. I'm not ashamed to say it because I don't get any royalty for any of the 30 books I wrote because Paul never got any royalties for the letters he wrote. And his letters have been distributed in millions of copies.

So we don't take royalties in our church just like we don't take offerings. So I don't hesitate to promote this so that people can be edified because a lot of people have told me, I find the Bible boring. I said, okay, stage one, start with this book, then go into the Bible.

And when you find something here, every page you read here will drive you to the Bible. So I've told people to read three pages a day. And in one year, you'll know more of the Bible than people who spent three years in a Bible school.

I can guarantee that. The other is a book called Hero, My Sons, which is for young people, young men and women. When my children left for college to the United States, nearly 10,000 miles away from home, I was scared what would happen to them.

So I wrote letters to them every week, sometimes more often than a week. And fortunately, I kept all those emails. These are, this is a compilation of those emails.

The advice I gave them, establishing them in the truth of doctrine, most of it is doctrine. Fathers, bring up your children in the instruction of the Lord. That's what I did.

And if you want to know what we teach in our church, it's here, how young people can be warned. So I just thought I would mention these two books.

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