

The Example of Jesus as a Young Boy

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of following Jesus' example in daily life, starting with studying the Scriptures diligently and teaching children to obey and respect their parents. It challenges parents to take responsibility for their children's spiritual upbringing and encourages them to seek God's help in bringing wayward children back to the Lord through prayer and repentance.

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Description

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Transcript

I'd like to turn to John's Gospel in chapter 1. You know, Jesus once told his disciples that as the Father sent me, so send I you. And if you are a born again child of God, which means if you have repented of your sins and ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart and be your savior, he's accepted you. Then you have a calling, not to be a full-time worker, very, very few are called to be full-time Christian workers.

Maybe I think 1 in 10,000 believers is called to full-time Christian work. But all the remaining 9,999 believers are still called to represent Christ and to be his witnesses. So those of you sitting here, you may not be called to full-time Christian work like I was called, but you are to represent Christ.

And as the Father sent him, he sends you into the world. Now I want to encourage all of you to take that seriously, his words, as the Father sent me, so send I you. So when we think of how the Father sent Jesus, there's one part of Jesus' ministry we can never do, that is to die for the sins of the world.

That was a special task only he could do. But there was another very important ministry that he fulfilled. And I want to read that to you in John chapter 1, it says in verse 18, no one has seen God at any time.

We know that. No one has seen God at any time. But the only begotten God who's in the bosom of the Father, that's Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

He has explained him. That's a very important word. Jesus came and explained to the world what the Father was like, not just in words, by the way he lived, the way he treated people and the way he lived his whole life.

He showed the world what the Father was like. And he has sent us with the same calling as the Father sent the Son, so he sent us to explain to the world what God is like, what Jesus is like. That is our primary calling.

So you don't have to be a preacher in order to do that, because we do that first of all by our life, to show the world what Jesus is like. Because remember, in Jesus' life, he lived 33 and a half years on earth. And out of that he preached only for three and a half years.

Never forget that. The Gospels are a description of those last three and a half years. What did he do in the other 30 years of his life? He explained to the world throughout his life what God was like.

No one had seen God, it says there, verse 18, no one has seen God at any time. And Jesus was the first person who came and showed the world what God was like. In the Old Testament, it was only the prophets who came and preached messages to the people.

And I'm sorry to say that today in many churches, it's messages that are being preached. That's Old Testament pattern. The New Testament pattern is to explain to the world what God is like.

And 30 out of 33 years in Jesus' life, he didn't preach, just by his life. So 90% of Jesus' life, he never preached. He just lived the life and showed the world what God was like.

You think he showed the world what God was like only in the last three and a half years he was alive? No. I believe when he was at home as a young teenager, he showed what God was like. When he was a carpenter, 20 years old, 25 years old, working as Joseph had died and he had to take care of his family.

He showed the world what the father was like. In difficult circumstances, he grew up in a poor home, worked as a carpenter, or we don't know exactly what exactly work he was doing, some type of work as a carpenter. He showed the world what God was like in his business, in the way he treated people.

And that is our calling. Beginning as in our own home, in the way Jesus treated his mother and responded, the Bible says that children must obey their parents, honor their parents. And I believe Jesus obeyed that.

He honored Mary and as long as Joseph was alive. And throughout his life at home, I can imagine the number of ways in which, you know, it says in Mark chapter 6 that Jesus, I don't know whether you know that, that Jesus had four younger brothers and two sisters. Turn with me to Mark chapter 6. This is just, some of you may know it already, but for the benefit of those who don't know it, in verse 3, the people in the synagogue said, is not this the carpenter? Jesus was known as a carpenter.

The son of Mary and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon, and his sisters are here. That means, I don't know how many sisters, but it means at least two. And it says plural sisters.

So Jesus was the eldest of seven children. I don't know whether all of you know that. Jesus was, Mary had at least seven.

There were more daughters than, more than that, but a minimum. Mary had seven children and Jesus was the eldest. And you know how it is.

I don't know whether you've seen or been in a home with seven children. If it's a poor home, it's good for us to see the type of home Jesus grew up in. To understand what it means to be a Christian.

It begins at home. It doesn't begin with preaching. It doesn't begin out in the world.

It begins in the home and then in your place of work. For the first 30 years of Jesus' life, 90% of his life, he was not preaching. And 90% of Christians are not preachers.

See, all of you are not called to be preachers, but Jesus is an example for you in the way he lived at home and in his place of work. That's all he was in 30 years. He was at home and in your place of work.

Where do you spend your time? At home and your place of work. Well, that's where Jesus spent 90% of his time. And if you want to know how to live there, in your place of work and in your home, you've got to say, Lord, show me how you lived at home.

How you lived in your place. And everywhere he was explaining to the world what God was like. He behaved in a way that people could understand what the true God was like.

In the Old Testament, nobody could do that. The Old Testament, they only proclaimed messages saying, this is how God wants you to live. And the standard was so high that the honest people would say, we can't live up to that standard.

For example, to love God with all your heart, who can do that? And to love your neighbor, which means everybody in the world, just like you love yourself, who can do that? Nobody can do it. It's impossible. The standards are so high.

So the Old Testament was proclaiming a standard which nobody could reach. But the purpose of what's called the law, the law was given not to make people holy. It was to show people you can never reach up to God's standard.

Remember this. God did not expect anybody to be able to keep the law because he knew that human nature is so corrupt, it can never keep the law. Then why did he give it? To help people to see don't think you're so spiritual.

Look at the standard. You have not come up to it. So the law was given to help people to see that they are sinners.

That's why in the Bible it says the law is like a mirror. When you look into a mirror, you can't wipe your dirty face with your mirror. But a mirror is very important.

I think all of us look at a mirror at least once a day or many times a day. What do you see? You see your face, your reflection. There's dirt on your face, your hair is not combed.

You see it in a mirror. And the law was exactly like that. The Old Testament, I'm trying to explain simple things to you, but you perhaps never knew that till now.

The Old Testament was not given to help people to live up to that standard, but to show them you cannot reach God's standard. And those who acknowledge that would say, Lord, we can't reach it. But this is your standard.

What are we supposed to do? Those are the people who found salvation. But the Pharisees, they pretended we are keeping the law. They were hypocrites.

They fooled all the simple people saying they are keeping the law and everybody respected them. Oh, these are the people who keep the law. We are simple people.

We can't keep it. And Jesus came and exposed them. He said you are a bunch of hypocrites.

The word hypocrite, by the way, is again not an English word. There are words like that you find in the Bible which are not English. You need to understand.

For example, amen. We all say amen at the end of prayer. Do you know what that means? It's not an English word.

When you say amen, what do you mean? For many years you have said amen. You heard somebody pray and you said amen. Okay, today I'll tell you what it means.

It's a Hebrew word which means it will be so. Did you mean that when you heard his prayer? For most people amen means you can open your eyes now. Prayer is over.

But that's not the meaning of amen. Amen is what that fellow said in prayer to God. It will be so.

Lord, I believe it's going to happen. When you say amen at the end of your prayer, you know what you're saying? Lord, I prayed for something just now to the best of my ability and faith. According to the level of my faith, I believe it will be so.

If it doesn't happen, two possibilities. One, you did not pray according to God's will. Then, of course, it won't happen.

Second, it was according to God's will, but you don't have faith enough for it. You remember once the disciples could not cast out a demon. Matthew chapter 17 and verse 14.

A man came up to Jesus and said, Lord, have mercy on my son for he's a lunatic. He's mad and very ill, and he often jumps into the fire and jumps into the water. Listen to this.

I brought him to your disciples, and they could not cure him. Before we go further, I want you to turn back to Matthew chapter 10. Matthew chapter 10.

This is where it begins. Matthew chapter 10, verse 1. Jesus called his disciples. And what did he do? He gave them authority over all unclean spirits to cast out every type of demon.

He gave them, I give you authority to cast out every demon, to heal every disease, to every kind of sickness. Now, he hasn't given that power to everybody. So that's not for you and me.

But he did give it to those 12. What did they have authority to do? They had authority to cast out every type of demon. Now we turn to John 17, verse 16.

Lord, I brought him to your disciples, and you could not cure him. And Jesus says, you unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Does Jesus speak like that to his disciples? Who was he speaking to? He wasn't speaking to that man. And the man said, I brought him to your disciples, and they could not cure him.

And Jesus said, you unbelieving people, how long have I got to be with you to do all this? I gave you authority to cast out the demon, and you could not do it. Then the man brought the child, and Jesus rebuked the demon, and the demon came out of him. The boy was cured at once.

Now you've got to read all this carefully. Then the disciples came to Jesus and said, why couldn't we drive him out? Well, I could expand Jesus' reply by saying, you remember I gave you a few days ago authority over every demon? You read that in Matthew 10, verse 1. But you didn't have faith. You know, Jesus can tell you, I've given you this, and it doesn't work in your life because you don't believe.

Here is a classic example of that. He specifically told them, I give you authority over every demon, but you don't have faith. And he said, if you had faith the size of a mustard seed in what I told you, that is in Matthew 10, verse 1, I give you authority over all demons.

If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could even say to this mountain, move away from here, it'll go. Nothing will be impossible for you. But in this particular case, it will not go out unless you pray and fast.

Now, why do you need to pray and fast to cast out a demon when Jesus has given you authority already? The praying and fasting is not to get the authority. The praying and fasting is, Lord, help me to have faith to believe in the authority you've given me. So, the Lord told those disciples that though I give you authority, if you don't have faith, it will not work for you.

That's the lesson we need to learn. There are many things promised in scripture, but if we don't believe it, it will not work in our case. Jesus came and manifested to the world what God was like.

Now he tells us, as the Father sent me, so send I you. And I'm supposed to manifest to the world what Jesus is like. Jesus once said, if you have seen me, you have seen the Father.

You don't need to. God hasn't come down. You've seen me, you've seen the Father.

And let me tell you our calling, brothers, your calling and my calling. If we claim to be disciples of Jesus Christ, we are supposed to say to people, if you have seen me, you've seen a little bit of what Jesus is like. Now, it's not true, but that is our calling.

And that's what we should aim for. I'm trying to show you the goal towards which we must live. Don't be satisfied with just going to church or just reading the Bible or just praying.

You must never be satisfied until you're able to reflect Christ in your life. It's a tremendous calling. When Jesus said, you shall be witnesses unto me, Jesus was a witness to the Father.

So let me show you that verse in John chapter 14. The reason I quote so much scripture, unlike many other preachers, is because I want your faith to be founded on God's word, not mine. And Jesus says here in verse 9 of John 14, the middle of verse 9, he who has seen me has seen the Father.

Yeah. And Jesus said, as the Father sent me, so send I you. That verse, by the way, is in John chapter 20.

Put these two verses together. John chapter 20, you read here in verse 21. Peace be with you.

This is after the resurrection. Many of you know that there's a thing called a Great Commission, going to all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. That's found in Mark's gospel, chapter 16.

Many people have heard of it. They call it the Great Commission. Go everywhere and preach the gospel to every creature.

There's another part of the Great Commission in Matthew 28. Go and make disciples of all nations and teach them to obey everything I've commanded you. But that is all towards the end of his 40 days on earth before he ascended.

But do you know what is the first part of the Great Commission? The three Great Commissions. What I just mentioned is number two and number three. Number two is go make, preach the gospel everywhere.

And number three is make disciples of all nations. But what is number one? That is in John chapter 20, verse 21. As the Father sent me, so send I you.

That's number one. Number two is go and preach the gospel to all nations. Number three is go and make them disciples.

Now, the thing is, a lot of people have concentrated on number two. Hardly anybody concentrates on number three. Make disciples.

They say preach the gospel and get them to accept Jesus and then leave them and move on. But Paul never did it like that. Paul knew that those he converted he had to make into disciples.

But I'm now trying to show you about number one. As the Father sent me, so send I you. So then I go back to Scripture and say, what did the Father send Jesus to do? Well, it was not just to die for the sins of the world.

Because he died for the sins of the world just a few hours on the cross. The last three hours on the cross. That's when he took the sins of the world.

When the Father forsook him. But what was he doing for 33 years? How can you sum up all those 33 and a half years of his life in one sentence? He explained what the Father was like. He who has seen me has seen the Father.

You look at Jesus' life, his compassion for the weak. That's what God is like. He washed the disciples' feet.

And it's immediately after that, that was John 13. And John 14, he says, you saw what I did now? Now see what God is like. God, when the day comes when we see God face to face, we will see that God is a very, very humble person.

All the arrogance and pride you see in Christians is of the devil. God is the exact opposite of that. That's why the devil found no place in heaven.

The devil could not find place in heaven because of one reason. The nature of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is humility, humility, humility. And there is no place in heaven for anyone who's got any spirit other than that.

And when the devil manifested pride there, I want to be the highest. He was immediately cast out. And I want to tell you in Jesus' name, anyone who's got that spirit will be rejected from God's presence.

Jesus revealed the Father by washing people's feet. In those days, that was a job of a slave. In Israel, they had slaves, usually not the Jews, but people of other nations.

And rich people had a slave. And when people came to their house with dusty feet because they wore sandals, they had a slave in that house with a bucket of water to wash their feet before they came in for dinner. So when at the Last Supper, Jesus had asked a rich man to give him the upper room of his house, but he said, I don't want a slave.

Keep the bucket of water there for people to wash their feet, but no slave because this is a private meeting with my disciples. So when the disciples went in there, their feet were all dirty. The bucket of water was there, but no slave.

They knew the procedure is somebody's got to wash the feet before they sit down for dinner. Nobody was going to do it. Everybody was important, self-important.

So Jesus said, I'm the slave here. And when he washed the feet, he was revealing what God is like. Dear brothers and sisters, remember, your calling is not just to preach and spread the gospel in various ways.

Primarily, our calling is to reveal to the world what Jesus Christ is like. As the father sent me, so send I you. As Jesus manifested the father by his life, by everything he did, his compassion for the poor and the weak and sick, by his humility in doing the lowliest jobs, by his caring for little children, children who are attracted to Jesus.

I've often said this. If you're not attracted to little children, if you don't love little children, something's wrong with you. You're not a Christian.

You can have any other definition of Christian you like, but a true Christian loves little children. He cares for them. He will encourage them.

When he goes to a home, he won't just talk to the adults. You ask yourself when you go and visit a home, do you ever speak to the children in that home? Or do you only speak to the grown-ups? Then you're not like Jesus. Let me tell you that straight to your face.

You are not like Jesus Christ. You can talk profound things to the older people in that house, but if you don't speak to the children, if you don't care for them, you are not like Jesus Christ. I believe Jesus, when he went into a home, he cared for the children.

He probably spoke to the children first, because he loved them. He said, these are the ones who are most like, most heavenly people in this house are these children. He explained the father.

It's a tremendous calling we have. Some of you may say, I can't go and preach the gospel all over the world. Never mind, brother.

That's the second part of the Great Commission. You can't do that. You say, I can't go and make disciples everywhere.

I'm not that calling. Fine. What about the first Great Commission? As the father sent me to explain what he was like, I'm sending you to show the world what I'm like.

Who is there who can say, I can't do that? You can do that if you're willing. And that's why we need the Holy Spirit. I'll tell you the primary reason why we need the Holy Spirit's power is not to be able to preach like somebody.

That is pride. It's covetousness. I want to be able to preach.

I want to get a name as a preacher, so I'll seek for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. You're an arrogant, proud man if you're seeking for that. God gives us the Holy Spirit.

What did Jesus say? Come with me to Acts of the Apostles, chapter 1, verse 8. Let's read it carefully. Why did Jesus say you must have the Holy Spirit's power? Acts 1, 8. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And what? You shall preach the gospel everywhere? You shall make disciples everywhere? That's not what he said here.

You will be my witnesses. What does it mean to be a witness of Jesus? I'll tell you what it means. To move around and show people what Jesus is like.

I have to be a witness by my life, first of all, before my words. Like somebody said to a preacher, listen carefully, your life is speaking so lovely that I can't listen to what you're saying. Your life is speaking so loud, I can't listen to what you're saying because your life contradicts everything that you say.

Your life is preaching another message. Your tongue is preaching another message. That is the tragedy with so many Christians.

So many preachers. Their life is preaching one thing and their mouth is preaching something else. That's called hypocrisy.

It's called acting. The word hypocrite is a Greek word which means actor. In the first century, if you went to Greece and asked where are the hypocrites, they'd say in the theater.

That's where all the hypocrites are. That means the actors. Today you ask where are the hypocrites, they say in the church.

That's where they are. Actors who are pretending to be holy when they are not, speaking so many profound words which is not true in their life. So the primary repentance required today is not among unbelievers.

It's among believers. Do you know that the last message that Jesus gave to his disciples found in the Bible. There are many messages Jesus gave to his disciples found in the Bible.

The last message Jesus gave to his disciples is not found in Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. It's not even found in Acts of the Apostles chapter 1. It is found in Revelation chapter 2 and chapter 3. Where Jesus says to the churches, you know what his message is? Repent. Repent.

Repent. Five times. So I say that is the last message of Jesus to backslidden church.

Repent. Turn around from the way you are going. And I believe that is the condition of many, many believers.

And that I certainly see that is the ministry the Lord has given me for the last 48 years. To tell Christians to repent. I thank God for all those people who go out and preach the gospel to unbelievers.

I value them. I respect them. They are also part of the body of Christ.

I'm not the whole body of Christ. They are also part of the body of Christ. They are doing a great job.

But my calling is to call the Christians to repent based on Revelation chapter 2 and chapter 3. And it's a very important ministry because what a lot of people in the world are saying is I see how these Christians live. So I can't listen to their words because their life is speaking louder than their words. They run after money and tell me not to love money.

They display a lot of anger and sin in their home when they tell me to be safe from my sin. So, I want to encourage you, my brothers and sisters, to see our primary calling is to show the world what Jesus is like. And I hope that we will all be gripped by that.

I was not gripped by that for more than 16 years after I was born again. And I'll tell you why. Because nobody preached this message I'm preaching now to me.

I was converted when I was 19 and a half. If somebody had told me that day and kept on emphasizing to me, Zach, you are not called primarily to preach. You're called to reflect Jesus Christ in your life.

From that life, preach Christ. Nobody told me that. So I began to share Christ, share Christ.

My life was not at all corresponding to Christ. I didn't even have a desire to become more and more like Jesus. I thought, I'm going to keep on sinning.

I will never stop sinning. And so, it was like that 16 years after I was born again. I was defeated by the same sins I was defeated when I was first born again.

You tell me honestly. Aren't you defeated today by some sins that defeated you when you were born again many years ago? Why is that? Why does anger remain in us for so long? Why do we keep offense? Why do you get offended with somebody and never overcome it? Because we've never heard that my primary calling is to reflect Christ. Do you know the only time Jesus got angry? I see two instances.

One was when he saw people making money in the name of religion. The Pharisees in the temple. And he got so angry that he made a whip.

You know it says he made a whip, John chapter 2. And he chased the people out of the temple. The only time Jesus physically hit, turned tables upside down, and drove all the sheep and opened the cages to let the birds go was when he saw people making money inside the church. That was the time he was really furious.

Do you get furious when you see people making money in the name of Christ? When you see a YouTube video where the preacher asks you to give money. Or you see a church keeping on asking you to give money. Do you get angry? What for? For them, for the pastor, for the preacher.

When you find a prayer letter sent out by somebody, please give me money for this work. Did Jesus ever do that? I'm surprised that Christians are not disturbed by it. I saw this is so completely contrary to Christ.

And so Christians are not reflecting Christ. These things don't disturb them. We have become so dead that we're not even disturbed by these things.

I'm disturbed all the time. That's why I speak so much against it. So much against preachers who keep on asking for money.

That's why we decided that in our churches we will never ask for money. We started the first CFC church 48 years ago and we were very, very poor. In a poor country like India, we were poor.

Way back in 1975, India was much poorer than it is today. Today it's a little better off. But we never asked anybody for money.

We say, well, whatever we have, we will give. And all the money we get, we give to the poor. Because I see in the Bible that Jesus and the apostles, whenever they told about giving money, it was never for Christian work.

Never, never, never. It was always give money to the poor. So if you give money to a rich preacher, who's got private jets in which he's flying around, you're disobeying God.

I'll tell you that. And all the advertisement to ask money that you find in Christian work today is for rich preachers who drive around in expensive cars and have private jets and people go and finance them. They are disobeying God.

And if you have done that in the past, I want to tell you today, you have disobeyed God and one day you have to answer to God for it. Maybe you are ignorant until today, but today onwards you are not ignorant. Those are not the people who need money.

It's the poor who need it. I don't need it. I'll tell you.

I'm very happy to live very, very simply at the level God has allowed me to live. And I don't want to increase my standard of living by getting money from other people. No.

I've not done that in the last 57 years of full-time Christian work. I lived at a high standard when I was in the Navy because I earned so much as a naval officer. But when I quit, I said, okay, my level dropped 80%.

That's where I've lived since then. And I'm happy to live there. I realized that's not everything.

To have grand clothes and everything else is not the main thing in life. So, I feel the great need, my brothers and sisters, wherever you have come from, many of you have come from different churches. Ask yourself, is your church and is your preacher reflecting Christ? Are they preaching the standards found in the gospel? As the Father sent me, so send I you.

That is the first great commission. And I showed you in John 1, when Jesus came, he explained the Father. He said, if you've seen me, you've seen the Father.

So, put these two verses together, what you read in John 14. If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. And then the next, John 20, as the Father sent me, so send I you.

So, that means I have to say, this is my calling. If you've seen me, you've seen a little bit of what Jesus Christ is like. I can't say that yet, but I say I'm working towards it.

My question is not whether you like that. My question is, are you working towards it? Is it a little better now than it was, say, five years ago? Or is your love at the same level? That's why I encourage you to read the gospels and study the life of Jesus. From the time he was a child.

As the Father sent me, so send I you. Let me study the life of Jesus. Let me begin at Luke chapter 2. Jesus began as a baby.

And what he did as a child is written in Luke chapter 2. At the age of 12, verse 42. Luke 2, 42. You see a little bit of what Jesus was like when he was a little child.

12 years old. Now keep in mind, the reason we are studying the life of Jesus now is so that we can be like him. And the Holy Spirit has come to make us witnesses.

What did we read in Acts 1.8? You shall be my witnesses. Not bear witness. Bearing witness is different.

Bearing witness is preaching. But Jesus said when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you shall be. Be my witness, which refers to my life.

If Jesus has said you shall bear witness to me, then it's referring to what I speak. It's like a witness in a court. He's bearing witness with his mouth.

I don't know how he lives, that man who's witnessing in court. I don't know how he lives, but he's witnessing what he saw with his eyes or something like that. But I'm not called to bear witness.

Acts 1.8, the Holy Spirit will come upon you and you shall be my witness. That means I have to be a witness by my whole life. That's why I need the power of the Holy Spirit.

All the time to reflect the way I live at home, that my wife must see more and more what Jesus is like. My children must see as they grow up what Jesus is like. The place I work, people in my office, my co-workers must know what Jesus is like.

That is our primary calling. So, here's how he started as a child. At the age of 12, he was taken to the temple.

And Joseph and Mary took him to the temple. And it says when they returned, they didn't, for a whole day, they didn't, verse 44, they began looking for him after 24 hours and discovered he was not there because they thought he was with our relatives and with the other children of the same age. And they did not find him.

And they walked back to Jerusalem. And three days later, they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of all the Bible teachers of that time, listening to them and asking them questions. Imagine a 12-year-old asking questions from Scripture to the scholars of that time.

And all those teachers, those great Bible teachers, we are trying to understand what Jesus was like as a little child. When they heard him, they were amazed at his understanding and the probing way in which he could answer certain questions. Okay, we are not 12 years old.

But if I say I accepted Christ at a certain age, I began at that time. By the time I'm 12 years after that point, do I know the Bible so well that I can even question Bible teachers? That's what I learned from that passage. Jesus was born at a certain age.

I became a Christian at a certain age. From that time, have I studied the Scripture so well? It doesn't matter who you are. You're not called to be a Bible teacher.

You're just called to be an ordinary Christian. The first thing I see about Jesus' life is that he really knew the Scriptures by the age of 12. And remember, in those days, there was no printed Bible.

Printing was discovered in the 1470s or 1480s or something. 1,400 years after the day of Pentecost, printing was discovered. How did people know the Bible in those days? How did Jesus, for example, he didn't have a Bible at home.

Can you imagine how you would know the Bible so well as to discuss the Bible with the Bible scholars if you didn't have a Bible at home? We have so many versions of the Bible today and still people don't know the Bible. They don't read it regularly. The only place in Nazareth that had a Bible would be the synagogue.

In those days, the Bible was written on parchment strips written by hand. The entire Bible was written by hand. Old Testament was only available in those days.

And in the synagogue, it would be very expensive to have a copy. Only the synagogue could afford to have one. And it was in scrolls.

The old parchment, the old different books of the Old Testament kept in different scrolls. How did Jesus learn it? By the age of 12. I'll tell you, I meditated on it.

The Bible says when you read the Bible, you meditate on it. I read this and I don't stop there and go on to the next verse. First question that comes to me is how in the world did he know the Bible by the time he was 12 years old if he didn't have a Bible at home? That's an example for me to follow.

Jesus said, follow me. I said, Lord, I want to follow you. If I don't have a Bible at home, how in the world will I know the Bible in a few years? I'll tell you how.

He would go to the synagogue as a young boy, maybe five, six years old. And he'd tell the rabbi. Rabbi means the teacher there.

Can you please read something from the Bible? It was the Old Testament. Read it for me. The rabbi would be thrilled.

That's a six, seven-year-old boy comes to him and asks him, maybe five years old, and asks him to read the Bible. He says, sure. Let me read something for you.

And he would read something, say, from Genesis. And after a while, Jesus would say, stop. Rabbi, sir, that's all I can absorb for today.

I'll come back tomorrow. The rabbi says, sure, come back. And he'd go home.

And we know what Jesus would do. He would meditate when he laid down at bed at night. He would meditate on what he heard that day.

He wouldn't ask the rabbi to read too much because he wouldn't remember all that. I'm trying to tell you what it means to follow Jesus. If you're really serious about following Jesus, which we all say, follow, follow, I'll follow him anywhere.

Here's what he did. Here's the first thing he did. That's what I decided to follow Jesus.

That's how I came to know the Bible. I was converted when I was 19 and a half. I said, OK, I'm going to start when Jesus started reading the Bible.

I go to the Bible. Now I have the Bible with me. I read a little bit.

And I meditate on it. Now I sometimes need to go back again and read it again. And I felt that Jesus started at the age of five to go to the rabbi every day.

OK, rabbi, can you read some more where he stopped yesterday? And go back day after day after day after day. 365 days of the year for seven years. And by the time he came to the age of 12, he could sit with the scholars and ask them questions.

I said, Lord, seven years after I'm born again, I should know the Bible so well that I can discuss it with somebody who's gone through a Bible school. And I'm a working person in the Navy. And Jesus was just an ordinary person.

He didn't go to a Bible school. He would just go every day and ask the rabbi to read something to him, which we can do sitting at home. My dear brothers and sisters, I'm trying to challenge you.

I'm not trying to condemn anybody here. Condemnation is from the devil. Never should you take anything I say as condemnation.

I hope it brings conviction that you've been a Christian so long and you don't know the Bible. I'll tell you the reason for it. Let me say it to you lovingly.

You are downright lazy. I'm not trying to condemn you. I'm trying to challenge you to follow Jesus, who knew the Bible at the age of 12.

You know, there are many people today who say Jesus healed the sick and cast out demons. I want to do that. Fine.

Begin with where he began at the age of five to get to know the Bible. I said, Lord, in seven years, if that little boy without a Bible at home could know the Bible, why can't I, in seven years after I'm born again, with a Bible at home, know it? And I decided I would. And I was a working person.

I had to go to work every day at nine o'clock in the morning and come back to my room at four o'clock when I was in the naval base and sometimes on the ship. You're on duty all the time. But I had a room to myself because I was an officer.

And I had privacy to study the Bible. And I decided I'm going to study the Bible. And I tell you, by the time seven years was up, by the time I was 26 years old, I really knew the Scriptures.

And at the age of 26, seven years after I was born again, the Lord took me out of the Navy to preach the gospel. He would never have called me to preach the gospel if I had not spent those seven years studying the Bible. My first Bible was full of my notes, page after page after page, because I said, I want to follow Jesus.

I want to ask you, do you really mean it when you say you want to follow Jesus? You want to be like him? Hasn't the calling come to you as the Father sent me, so send I you? Is it only for some people who are called to preach? I believe there are many people who are called to preach. But because they did not study like Jesus did, they missed that calling. It's possible there are some people sitting here who are called to preach the word.

But you let down God because you didn't study the word well enough. You say, oh, I'm not called to be a pastor. Forget being a pastor.

You're called to be a disciple of Jesus. I was never called to be a pastor. I was called to be a disciple of Jesus.

Even today I say, I'm not a pastor. I'm not a reverend or any such thing. I'm just a disciple of Jesus.

Disciple means a follower. A follower is one who sees what his master is doing and does that. And what I see in Jesus' life is he studied the scriptures first.

That's the first thing I see written about Jesus in the Bible. Not healed the sick and cast out demons and all that. It comes much later.

I want to ask you as a Christian, how long have you been a Christian? 20 years? How well do you know the scriptures? That shows how serious you are about following Jesus. Now, I know, you know, if in a class everybody fails in mathematics, you can be pretty sure the problem is not with them. It's the mathematics teacher was a poor teacher.

So I don't blame you. I blame the pastors you listen to. You're sitting in the wrong church, listening to the wrong pastors who never told you to follow Jesus in this area.

They told you, make sure you pay your tithes. Make sure you pay your membership fees. They never told you that you should follow Jesus in the way he lived.

Okay, let's move on. It says here then, after that, he, I mean, imagine he was three days without, 12 years old, a young boy. And if Joseph and Mary hadn't come there, he would have stayed on there for a whole month.

He was so delighted to talk about the Bible. Imagine a 12-year-old so interested in talking about scripture. I see, it's amazing.

And when you really grip by the scriptures, when you read the scriptures and spend seven years studying it, you really want to share that with others. And then it says he went back home and see the next thing written about him. We saw one thing.

Okay, we're trying to follow Jesus step-by-step. He went home at the age of 12. In verse 51, he went down to Nazareth, and he continued in subjection to them.

So what did Jesus do for the next many years at home? The next thing we read in John chapter 3 is when he was 30 years old. That's when he went to get baptized. We'll come to that later.

But what did he do from the age of 12 to the age of 30? The Bible says, honor your father and mother. Children, obey your parents. This is the first commandment with a promise.

And the promise is, honor your father and children, obey your parents. It will go well with you. Turn with me to Ephesians in chapter.

This is all elementary stuff, which we should know. Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 1. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, for this is the first commandment with a promise.

What is the first thing that we need to teach our children? I want to ask all of you parents, whether you've done it. Teach them to honor their father and mother. That is, be respectful to your parents.

Obey, it says there in verse 1. Children, obey. That's how it interprets honor your father and mother. Children, obey your parents, for this is right.

Because it says honor your father and mother. So honoring father and mother means you obey them. So the first thing I need to teach my children, when they are little, from the time they are very little, is to obey.

And right from the age of one, they can understand something. How much do children understand at the age of one? I'll tell you what I saw once. I saw a little child in a home, going near a staircase, trying to climb up.

One year old, crawling up there. And from behind, the father said, no, sternly. And even though the child did not know probably the meaning of the word no, the stern voice made the child stop and look around and, no, you can't climb the stairs.

It understood it. So I learned one thing that day. The children understand the word no.

If it is spoken sternly. Not if you speak it gently, darling. No, don't do that.

Not like that. Sternly, they understand it. Now I'll tell you how I know that child understood it.

The next day, I saw that child, this is the truth, going near the same staircase, but before it climbed it, looked around to see if anybody's looking. Why? Because it knew that it's forbidden. How did it know it was forbidden? Because it heard, the child heard the father say no the previous day.

I learned something that day. The children understand something even at the age of one. Teach them obedience from that age.

Teach them that certain things are no, no. Playing with knives, climbing up stairs at that age, they'll fall down, break their bones. Little things.

Teach them obedience is the first thing, and to speak respectfully. If your child speaks disrespectfully to father or mother, tell them to drop whatever they are doing, whatever their age is, even if they are 15, 16, 20 years old, and they speak disrespectfully to their parents at home. You say, my son, I don't know what you're doing, but drop it.

Go and ask forgiveness from mommy for the way you spoke to her just now. Children don't know what's important. I've done that.

I was strict with my children. They wouldn't dare to speak disrespectfully to me. They usually speak disrespectfully to mommy, and I would make them stop their work.

Go and speak respectfully to your mother. I don't care what important work you're doing, drop it. My brothers and sisters, the reason why I'm saying this strongly is because when you see the way children are growing up in this country, I'll tell you the fault is 100% with their parents.

They have not taught their children to speak respectfully. That's why they speak so rudely to even older people. I used to tell my children, you must not speak disrespectfully even to a homeless man or a beggar on the street.

We are to speak respectfully to all human beings. And if you speak disrespectfully to somebody, drop everything and go and ask forgiveness from that older person. In the church, I would teach my children, when you speak respectfully to everyone who's older than you.

Jesus obeyed his parents. That's what we read. That's the next thing we read in his life.

And it says, children obey your parents because, Ephesians 6.3, that it may be well with your children, that you may live long on the earth. Let me ask you parents. Do you want it to go well with your children? Do you want them to live long on the earth? Every parent will say, I want it to go well with my children.

I want them to live long on the earth. Well, I'll tell you what they should do. Teach them to honor their father and mother.

Teach them to be respectful to all people who are older than them. I want to ask you, many of you, your children are grown up. Do they speak respectfully to older people in the church? Do they speak respectfully to the older people they meet, whenever they meet them anywhere? Uncles and aunts who come to visit you in your home.

Do your children speak respectfully to them? Are they rude? It's not their fault. Not at all. It's 100% the fault of their parents, who did not start teaching them from the age of one.

I don't blame the parents. I blame the pastors these parents listen to. The pastors only told you to give your money.

They never told you to bring your children up properly. And the result is, we have a generation of children growing up, who are not following the Lord, who are worldly. They're watching pornography when they're 16 years old.

They've never learned to obey their parents. They speak rudely to their parents. They speak rudely to everybody else.

They tell lies in society and they do so many wrong things. It says here that it may be well with you. It is not going well with so many children of believers.

Why is it not going well with them? You know the Bible says that, one of the conditions for being an elder in a church, is written in 1 Timothy and chapter 3. Conditions for being an elder in a church. He must be

one, 1 Timothy 3 verse 4, who can keep his children under control with all dignity. If your children are wayward, don't know how to speak respectfully, you are not fit to be an elder brother in any church.

Do you know the number of pastors I have come across in my life, whose children are wayward, worldly, and all these dumb people sitting in the church, respecting such a pastor. I would never respect such a pastor. I say that guy's got no right to stand in that pulpit.

Look at his children. How worldly they are. According to 1 Timothy 3 verse 4, he has no right to stand in the pulpit and preach.

Get rid of him. How many Christians have the respect for God's word? That's a tragedy today. A lot of people, when they hear me, they say, Brother Zak, you're very extreme.

What a sad thing. That when I quote the Bible, they think I'm extreme. Then you better fight against the Holy Spirit, brother, not me.

I didn't write that. It's the Holy Spirit who wrote that a man, if he desires to be at the office of an elder in a church, he must be one who controls his own family, keeping his children under control with all whole dignity. Why? You say, why? The Holy Spirit gives an answer in the next verse.

Because if a man does not know how to take care of his three, four children at home, how is he going to take care of a church with 30, 40 people or 400 people? That's the argument. Logic. If he cannot bring up four children in God's ways, how is he going to preach to 400 people? Isn't that logical? And yet how many Christians, how many of you have taken that seriously? Don't listen to a man who's not brought up his children properly.

I said that to myself when I started preaching. I've got four sons. I said, if they become wayward, I'll stop preaching.

Not if they do a few foolish things here and there. You know, it's all children. They grow up.

They do one or two foolish things now and then and get up and go on. But if they grow up to be consistently evil, worldly, no interest in following the Lord, something is wrong. I have no respect for a man whose children are not following the Lord.

I don't care how well he preaches. Whenever I hear a preacher, I say, I want to say, tell me how his children are. Can you tell me how his children are? Then I listen to him.

Do you believe that's important? Do you believe 1 Timothy chapter 3 is scripture? Do we believe the Holy Spirit has taken the trouble to write this, to show us what type of leadership we should have in our church? And who are the people who are putting these people up as leaders? Many of you are paying money to keep that man in that job. I would never pay a pastor if his children are wayward. I say, you shouldn't be there.

You should resign and go get somebody else. Get some layman who has not gone to a Bible school. Okay, he won't be able to preach the Bible so well, but at least he'll tell us how to follow Jesus.

The great thing is not to preach profound sermons from the pulpit. Now, some of these messages, you probably never heard a message like this before, but I do preach certain things which others don't preach because it is in the Bible. I tell people, can you tell me something which I'm preaching which is not in the

Bible? I'm just reading how Jesus grew up, and I have a burden.

And I'll tell you why. I believe that when I preach, sometimes I think like this. Jesus is sitting there in the seat, listening to me.

I preach in his presence. I dare not say something which is not in the Bible. I dare not say something I have not practiced.

If I haven't practiced, I'll say, well, I haven't got there yet. I'm aiming there. I'll say that honestly.

And the reason is because one day, I know this with all my heart, I will have to stand before my Savior and my Lord and give an account to him for every single sermon I preached in my life. Every one of those sermons on YouTube. There are about a thousand or more of them.

I have to give an account to Jesus one day. If I was a hypocrite in what I said there, or if I said something which is not in the Bible, or I read the Bible carelessly and preached something, or I said something which led people astray. Many, many things like that we see, unfortunately, going on in Christendom.

You know, that's one reason we started CFC. That's one reason why Martin Luther started a Protestant church separate from the Catholic Church. Imagine that.

If nobody had the guts and the courage to stand against the Catholic Church in the 1500s like Martin Luther did, where would everybody be? They'd all be Roman Catholics. So, and then the followers of Martin Luther also went astray. Then God had to raise up other men to bring the Church back to the truth.

And then the followers of John Wesley, who was a godly man before he started the Methodist Church. Years later, they went astray. And many years later, God raised up William Booth to start the Salvation Army.

Godly man. After that, they went astray. Throughout history, there's been this history of people trying to save people and come bring them back to the Bible.

Martin Luther brought people back to the Bible. John Wesley brought people back to the Bible. And William Booth brought people back to the Bible.

Everywhere, people had gone astray, and they bring back the Bible, back to the Bible. And then that group also goes astray. God has to always raise up people to bring them back to the Bible, back to the Bible.

And that is how God's work has gone on throughout these centuries. And I want to say to you, my brothers and sisters who come here to listen, wherever you're living, God can use you. You may not be a qualified preacher or pastor or any such thing.

God can use you in your own way to witness to other people. If you're trying to live the way the Bible teaches, you can bring people back to whatever you understood in Scripture. Begin with bringing the children to Christ.

To follow in God's ways. Well, I'm not going to continue now, but I want to say this, that if your children are already grown up, and they have gone astray, you say, what hope is there for me? I'll tell you, there is hope for you. There's a word in the Bible which says, there is nothing impossible with God.

I love that verse. There are so many impossible things in the world, but Jesus said there's nothing impossible with God. And when he said nothing, it means nothing.

Your wayward children, who've gone astray from the Lord, is it possible for them to come back to the Lord? Let everything around you say impossible. God says it is not impossible. And this is what I've told parents with wayward children to do.

Will you promise that you will do this? You and your wife, kneel down before God and confess every known sin set everything right that you know in your own life that needs to be set right. Pay back every debt that you owe. Ask forgiveness from everybody whom you have hurt.

Forgive everybody who has hurt you. I'm just telling you to get your conscience right, otherwise you can't pray. And then, forgive each other for the way you hurt each other through the years.

Kneel down and say, Lord, this son of mine has gone astray. My fault. Take the blame.

I did not bring him upright. This girl of mine has gone astray. My fault, Lord.

I didn't bring her upright. Lord, forgive me. I don't want to blame the pastors of mine who never taught me these things.

Late in life, now I'm learning it. I thank God I came to the conference in RLCF. At least now, at this age, I've learned something.

Lord, I kneel down and I pray, please have mercy on us. Forgive us for our failure. We take the blame 100%.

We don't blame anybody. We are not blaming the pastor who didn't teach us. We're blaming ourselves.

We had a Bible. We could have read it ourselves. We didn't do it.

Forgive us. Please bring my girl back to you. Please bring my son back to you.

I want to ask you to kneel down and take five minutes a day. That's not too much. Husband and wife, father and mother, kneel down and take five minutes a day.

That's all. And cry out to God and say, Lord, bring my son back. Bring my daughter back to you.

You keep doing that and I tell you, God will do a miracle for your children. I don't care how far they have gone away from the Lord. There is nothing impossible with God.

Will you do that? Or you think kneeling down and praying for five minutes and setting everything right is too much of a price to pay? You want your children to go to hell eternally? Take it seriously. This is what it means to follow Jesus, to teach our children the way Jesus lived. It says he obeyed his father and mother.

Let's pray. Dear brothers and sisters, no one should go away from here feeling condemned. Convicted, yes.

Condemned, no. Because I say in Jesus' name, there is hope for everybody in this hall. Everybody who is listening to me right now.

Even if you are listening to it years later from YouTube. There is hope for you because God is a living God. Trust him.

And whatever God spoke to you today, say, Lord, I want to obey. I want to explain to this world by my life how Jesus lived. A little bit.

By my study of the scriptures. By my bringing up my children right. Seeking to follow you in simplicity.

Help us, Lord, each one, we pray. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Video: https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/vRT_eV5aFP8.mp4

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