

Value Life and Fellowship More Than Anything Else

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of valuing life and fellowship above all else in the Christian life, and warns against the dangers of seeking spiritual gifts and experiences.

Scripture: 1 John 2:12

Topics: "Spiritual Life", "Fellowship"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of valuing life and fellowship above all else, drawing from John's writings about the beginning when God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit had life and fellowship. He discusses the three levels of spiritual life outlined in 1 John: children who rejoice in forgiveness, young men who overcome Satan, and fathers who prioritize knowing God and manifesting His character. Poonen warns against being drawn to gifted preachers or seeking after miracles, highlighting the significance of seeking divine life and fellowship with humble, godly individuals to avoid falling away.

Transcript

John begins his gospel and his first letter by mentioning the things that were in the beginning. In the beginning when there were no doctrines, church patterns, baptism, etc., over which Christians debate now, there was only God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and they had life and fellowship among themselves (1 John.1:1-3). It is life and fellowship that we should value more than anything else. In 1 John, chapter 2, John writes about three levels of spiritual life.

Children (1 John 2:12): The main characteristic about children is that they rejoice in the forgiveness of their sins, they know that they have a Father who loves them and would take care of them. If we are occupied with forgiveness of sins and the Father's blessings, it shows that we are only children spiritually.

Young Men (1 John 2:13): Young men are strong and the word of God abides in them and they overcome Satan. Even if we have victory over sin, and are occupied with serving God and are able to overcome Satan, we are still young spiritually.

Fathers (1 John 2:14): There are those who have grown to become spiritual fathers, and the only thing that matters to them is knowing God as He has been from the beginning, signifying life and fellowship. The greatest calling we have is to manifest the life and the character of God. In the beginning God was not

doing miracles or casting out devils, but having divine life and enjoying fellowship. We too can experience the life of God and have fellowship with others who have that life.

Many go to church to listen to gifted preachers, to listen to good music, watch healings and miracles, receive help for earthly needs, etc. We read in Mark 6:20 that King Herod loved to listen to the fiery preaching of John the Baptist but that did not make him spiritual. God draws out people who are seeking from the depth of their heart for His life, and such people have fellowship with others with the same life, even if the others have no outstanding gifts. If we are only being drawn to gifted people, it shows us that we could be just like Herod. Those who are being drawn to gifts and not divine life and fellowship with humble godly people will fall away soon. But those who are being drawn to life will not fall away.

It takes many years for us to partake of divine nature. But spiritual gifts can be received in an instant. Gifts are like garments which can be put on, but which do not change the person inside. Balaam's donkey could speak in an unknown tongue, but it was still only a donkey. Balaam himself could prophesy about the Messiah, but he was one who led Israel to sin.

God has not placed many gifted brothers in the church, to sift between those who would seek for life and others who would seek for gifts. A person who cannot have any fellowship with godly brothers who are not so gifted manifests that it is not life that he seeks.

Jesus said that false prophets would prophesy, do miracles and cast out demons in His name (Matthew 7:22). But He would have to tell them that they had never been His (Matthew 7:23 LB). Most people do not understand that those who have such gifts may not even be born again. Jesus tells us not to look for gifts, but fruit like patience, goodness, mercy, kindness, etc. When you listen to a great preacher, do you ever seek to find out about his family life, his relationships with co-workers, his attitude to money and honour etc. That is how we distinguish between true and false prophets.

Babylon is built on the basis of gifts which is admired and valued much. But Jerusalem the true church is built by life and fellowship.

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