

# What God Has Done In Our Marriage (Zac & Annie Poonen Testimony)

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon shares a personal testimony of a couple's 51-year marriage journey, highlighting the challenges faced, the importance of seeking God's presence in marriage, the need to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and the significance of glorifying God in marriage. It emphasizes the continuous growth in faith, the importance of being poor in spirit, and the power of prayer in overcoming trials and challenges.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 9:12, Matthew 5:3, James 5:16, Proverbs 4:18, Ephesians 5:18, Malachi 2:15, Titus 2:4

**Topics:** "Faithfulness in Marriage", "The Role of the Holy Spirit"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Even non-Christians would like to have a happy marriage. It's not only Christians. So we were married 51 years ago on the 19th of June 1968 and all I can say is God's been very good to us.

When we got married we did not have an understanding of victory over sin. So we don't want to pretend that we had a marriage without getting angry or any such thing. That would be a lie.

A lot of people tell such lies. I wouldn't tell such lies. We started out defeated but God brought us to a wonderful life over a period of time as we understood the new covenant and the life of victory and thus brought us to a very glorious life and we read that the path of the righteous is like the shining light that shines brighter and brighter until the perfect day.

We start at zero and I think many of us almost all of us start not at zero but at minus something because we are so defeated. When we are born again we are not victorious. We're defeated Christians and any any honest believer will say we're defeated but we don't stay there.

That's the point and one of the things that God did for Annie and for me was he filled us with the Holy Spirit separately. He filled her with the Holy Spirit and filled me the Holy Spirit and the Bible says when it speaks about husbands and wives the first thing it says is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5 18.

A lot of people begin the section for husbands and wives with verse 22 but that's not where it begins. A good marriage, a good Christian marriage begins in Ephesians 5:18. Be filled with the Holy Spirit and then it brings into our life a spirit of thanksgiving verse 19-20 and then verse 21 is a very important verse in marriage.

Be subject to one another so it's not just the wife being subject to the husband it's be subject to one another so husband and wife have to both be subject to one another because each has got a boundary that God has drawn around and there are responsibilities and privileges that the wife has and that the husband has and so we have to be subject to one another we must not God has drawn a boundary around a husband and a wife and God's even drawn a boundary around children we must not go into the other person's boundary that's what it means to be subject to one another otherwise the husband will be a dictator and the wife will be like a slave and that's not God's will so it begins in verse 21 both be subject to one another and then it says wives be subject to your own husbands and the husband of the Lord and the you know in a worldly marriage they may want to be happy but in a Christian marriage our main goal is not to be happy I don't want to say at the end of 51 years we are very happy even though we are we should be able to say we have glorified God in our marriage because the purpose of Christian marriage is not to make people happy Jesus did not come to make people happy he came to make people holy and when we are holy we'll have genuine happiness that follows holiness so people who are pursuing happiness in their marriage are not going to be happy it'll be a superficial thing that will come and disappear and come and disappear but if you are pursuing holiness you'll be genuinely happy both are concerned for the glory of God because in marriage it says here we are to reflect the relationship between Christ and the church because that's the picture here and says in verse 31 a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife the two shall become one flesh and I'm referring to Christ and the church so this relationship between man and woman is to reflect Christ and the church and now that's not in a worldly marriage in a worldly marriage they're only concerned about happiness and learn to say thank you and learn to say sorry when you hurt each other and go out once in a while for a meal and and so many things like that but in a Christian marriage we're thinking of glorifying God whatever you do do all for the glory of God so if we don't glorify God and we just make each other happy I'd say it's a useless marriage as far as Christ is concerned if the marriage is glorified God then it's fulfilled God's purpose so our aim must be Jesus the Bible says 1 Corinthians 10:31 whatever you do do for the glory of God you get married it must be for the glory of God not for selfish satisfaction and if I marry for the sake of selfish satisfaction or to show other people that I've got a good marriage you'll be a failure as far as God is concerned even if you get honor from people because a lot of people like that I've seen a lot of Christian marriage testimonies where they talk wonderful things about each other and how they're having a very happy time but I don't see their lives glorifying God I don't see their children growing up for the glory of God so I say that's a useless marriage as far as God is concerned whatever they may say because they haven't glorified God in their marriage they haven't glorified God in their home so you young people when you think of marriage it's very important that you think of glorifying God that's the primary aim of marriage and if that is the purpose of marriage then you must yourself be one who's devoted where Christ is first in your life so this is the thing when I was considering marriage I said Lord I don't want to marry someone for whom Christ is not first so right from before when we even considered each other and our names were suggested to each other by a godly elder brother whom both of us respected and in whose church we both belonged and he spoke to her and he spoke to me and he said he'd been praying for us and he was 30 years older than us a very godly man the most godly man I met in India and he we prayed about it and I said Lord I don't know her at all in Indian culture we can't go out with anybody we can't you know even court we had to trust the Lord God is not a prisoner of any culture but I was one concerned about one thing that's Lord I want to know

whether Jesus Christ is everything to her that's all I want to know and I want you to assure me of that that she's a person for whom Christ is supreme who can say to Jesus in the words of Psalm 73:25 Lord there's no one on earth I desire but you and when I get to heaven I only want you that was my position I had said that to the Lord very clearly there's no one on earth I desire beside you I'm not even interested in marriage Christ is everything to me and if Christ wants me to get married I'll get married I really that's the happiest foundation for marriage not well I'm 28 years old so I should get married no if Jesus Christ wants me to get married I'll get married otherwise I'm quite happy to be single because the will of God is more important to me than my own pleasure my own satisfaction a lot of people get married for their own lust and their own satisfaction and because it's suggested by parents and so many things I'm not saying such marriages and be unhappy but it'll never be the best the best marriage is where a person says Lord Jesus I want to fulfill your will for my life whatever it is I want you to be first in my life I want you to be Lord of my life I desire nothing on earth but you and I don't even want anything in heaven but you and if you get two people like that married it'll be a very happy marriage I mean happy in the sense happy in Christ and then they'll be able to reflect the relationship between Christ and the church so and the purpose of two being put together you know I like to read a verse in Luke chapter 10 Luke's gospel chapter 10 after this the Lord appointed 70 others of his disciples and he sent them in pairs now think of this as a picture of marriage there of course he was talking about two men disciples going out to share the word but think of this verse in relation to a married couple the Lord sent them as a pair ahead of him to every city and place where he himself was going to come see the Lord is going to come to this earth to your city to my city and to every place where he is going to come he sends a married couple you go there and reflect my life to the people in that town and city let them see something of Christ and his church the relationship between Christ in the church in your relationship as husband and wife and as I said none of us start perfectly we all start with a selfish nature that when we come together we discover how selfish we are and that selfishness can lead to misunderstandings it can lead to strong words where we hurt one another etc but if we say Lord we want to glorify you we will repent of it and apologize and set things right and gradually come to a life of blessedness and peace where such things don't exist where Christ is really Lord in the midst of that marriage that should be our goal every married person should have that as a goal Lord we want to live with each other in our house exactly as if Jesus Christ were physically living in the house and how would we talk to each other if Jesus was sitting there in front of us that's the way we want to talk to each other all the time and you would never be rude to your marriage partner if Christ was sitting right there with you impossible you would never get angry with him or her the Christ is there you wouldn't behave selfishly so the most important thing is for us to recognize the presence of Jesus Christ in our home as a married couple very very important and that doesn't come easily because we are so much more conscious of the world and so many other things but it can come more easily if you determine as I said that Christ is the one whom you want more than anything else so when I was considering marriage I said Lord I want to marry someone who for whom Christ is first I never want to be first in her life I told her that in my entire life I never want to be first in your life I want to be second I want Christ to be first in your life and then me second and I told her you will never be first in my life you'll be second Christ will be first in worldly marriages they say we must keep each other first okay that's okay for the worldly marriages let them do that but in a Christian marriage Christ is first your partner is second and I'm very happy that after 51 years we still have sought to maintain that same attitude we had 51 years ago that Jesus Christ would be first I can't think of any time where I decided my wife is going to be first Christ is going to be first and I want to say that particularly to you because that's the only way to a marriage that glorifies God see we are not Jesus didn't come to make us happy he came to make us people who will glorify God and our marriage must glorify God and when we have that type of home see with Christ is always there in our home it brings

what does Christ bring Christ will bring the atmosphere of heaven there and when children grow up in that atmosphere of respect for God and respect for one another they will absorb that over a period of time and even though all children are naughty in the beginning they'll absorb that and they will gradually open up themselves to receive Christ as Lord of their own lives so this is our goal God unites us we read in Malachi and chapter 2 Malachi 2 in verse 15 in the margin of my Bible and it's this verse is translated in different ways in different translations but here the latter part of that verse Malachi 2 15 in the middle of that verses and what did that one do in the margin of a Bible which says and why did he make you one why did the Lord make you and your husband or you and your wife one because he wanted a godly offspring that's the reason why he made husband and wife one one of the reasons anyway to reflect Christ in the church which is of course not in the days of Malachi that was only after the Holy Spirit came but otherwise even in the Old Testament God says the reason he makes a husband and wife one is so that they can have godly offspring that means godly children to have children that's easy anybody can have children a foolish sinner godless person can have children but to have godly children for that you need a godly husband and wife and I tell you it's that's why it's very important for those who are single here to be very careful that you marry people that you get married to someone for whom Christ is first in their life so that you will always be second you pray like that if you're not yet married Lord give me a person who will only put me second and I will put you first in his life or her life that'll be the most blessed marriage where Christ is glorified and you'll have godly offspring which is God's word why did he make you one why did God make husband and wife one that he can have godly offspring this is very important for us and I'll tell you why we felt like that that because when you look around we were married 51 years ago and we looked around at Christendom we saw so many many pastors and preachers and Christians who claimed to be born again but their children were wayward and unconverted I said Lord I don't want a home like that it dishonors you the devil's being glorified in that home I don't want a home that glorifies the devil and so I remember when we were married the Lord gave us a verse for our children as soon as our first son was born and that was in Isaiah chapter 54 and it's interesting that the Lord gave her and me the same verse separately so then we knew it was from the Lord Isaiah 54 and verse 13 all your sons in the margin of my Bibles it says will be disciplined by the Lord all your sons the Lord will make them his disciples and the well their well-being that means their spiritual well-being not that they will be financially rich but their spiritual well-being of your sons will be great but that's exactly what I wanted that's exactly and she got the same verse and we said Lord that's what we want in our marriage we want you to disciple our children and we want their spiritual well-being to be great so the primary purpose of marriage is not children because if that were the primary purpose of marriage then every godly couple in the world will have children but the fact of the matter is that many born-again married couples do not have children so that's not the primary purpose of it's a secondary purpose of marriage to have godly offspring but the primary purpose is that we must reflect the relationship between Christ and the church that was not there in the Old Testament in the Old Testament it is only godly offspring because the relationship between husband and wife is not important but in the New Testament it says in Ephesians 5 you have to reflect the relationship between Christ and the church so it's very important that that unity of the like the head for the body is manifested in a relationship between husband and wife and so from the beginning we started to concentrate on that and as I said whenever we slipped up we would repent and come to the Lord and be honest we didn't want to pretend before others that oh we are perfect when we are not perfect that would be hypocrisy and we realized that hypocrisy is the number one sin that Jesus condemned so we never wanted to be hypocrites we didn't want to be a hypocritical husband and wife like a lot of we found a lot of Christian husbands and wives and they would come to the church and pretend to be very happy and holy but they were not in private life and they were absolute hypocrites and they didn't realize that they were sinning more than anybody else in the church by

being hypocrites so we said we don't want to be hypocrites we don't want to pretend that everything is okay when it's not okay I'm not saying we confess our sin in public but we can say we are struggling and but we want to be honest but we believe that we will come to the place where we left victory and have a life which where we reflect the relationship of Christ and the church and like the you know like the Bible says the path of the righteous Proverbs 418 that's been one of my favorite verses if you don't know it you must know it because it applies to the single person and the married couple Proverbs 418 please remember this verse all your life it applies to individual Christians and it applies to family life as well the path of the righteous the righteous individual and the righteous married couple is to be like the light of the Sun from dawn till noonday position it gets brighter and brighter and brighter and brighter and brighter and brighter so you know early morning it's not so bright in the around us it's a dawn is a dull type of light that's how we begin our marriage and everyone who's honest will acknowledge that but as the time goes on and we walk with the Lord it should get brighter and brighter and brighter pressing on to perfection and that can only come if you say to each other inwardly Christ is going to be first in our life and you're going to be second that'll be the most blessed marriage you can ever think of so that I've is one of the main things that we have stressed in our life and to keep a good conscience to be quick to ask forgiveness immediately from the Lord and from one another because in every marriage there will be a need to ask forgiveness for one another and you know even a small little slip up we must immediately set it right it's like whether it's a big thorn or a small thorn that got into your foot you pull it out immediately so whether it's a big misunderstanding or a small little slip up with one unkind word we ask forgiveness immediately and set it right so that the relationship is always kept straight and clear very very important and the two words which I want to show you in Ephesians 5 which should be true in a Christian home it's the last verse of Ephesians 5 in a Christian marriage the husband verse 30 Ephesians 5 33 must love his wife seek to love her like Christ loved the church and the wife it says must respect her husband the two very important words where 33 wife must respect her husband and the husband must love his wife and remember this is in the context verse 32 of Christ and the church it's not like it's not what the world considers respect or the world the world considers love it's Christian love which is different from worldly love it's a self-denying type of love and respect is to respect the husband is the one whom God has appointed to be my head because it says Adam was created first and the woman was created to be her helper and where we try to maintain that relationship I believe God can fulfill his purpose the other thing that we sought for in our marriage in all these years was from Matthew chapter 18 in Matthew 18 Jesus said and I believe this we would use this for our own married life verse 20 if two are gathered together now there's a difference between gathered together and gather together gather together means two people just come together gathered together means somebody else brought them together that's the Holy Spirit and that's how it should be in a Christian marriage the Holy Spirit brings two people together they are gathered not that they themselves decided to gather together they are brought together by the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus there Jesus is in the midst so I see that as a picture of a true Christian marriage where the Holy Spirit brings a man and a woman together and Christ is in their midst and when Christ is in their midst it becomes three the husband wife and Christ and then verse 19 we go backwards from there because I say I will tell you why I say backwards because whenever you find the word for verse 20 begins at the word for for means it's connected to the previous verse so you got to go backwards from verse 20 up to verse 18 so we begin at verse 20 and then we go to verse 19 if these two with Christ in their midst agree about anything they ask it shall be done for them by my father who is in heaven where Christ is in the midst and I'll tell you something once again let me repeat Christ cannot be in the midst if you love each other more than you love Jesus Christ Christ will never take second place in anybody's life you either give him first place or no place he's going to be Lord of everything or not Lord at all so if in your marriage you want to give Christ second place

maybe your job first place or your whole house first place or your home first place or your wife first place or your children first place I can tell you Christ will not be in that marriage I'll tell you that straight because Christ will not take second place in anybody's life or any marriage that's why from the beginning I stress the most important thing is Christ must be first so where he is in the midst then he unites the two and when two agree together and the word in the Greek word for agree is symphony it's a picture of two musical instruments playing on the same scale and sounding so beautiful because they are playing together it's a picture of two two if two are in symphony that's the meaning of that word two musical instruments a husband and wife must be like two musical instruments playing together no discord you know sometimes you listen to some music and people are not playing the notes correctly and there's a jarring sound that shouldn't be there in a marriage if two are in symphony then there's a tremendous power in prayer and we have used those two verses almost all our life we say Lord we were brought together by you and you are first in our life and you'll always be first and now we want to ask you something for example if our children had a problem in school with the teacher or something like that or with some other troublemakers in the school here's the prayer we'd say Lord we want you to answer us and solve this problem bind these satanic activities that are affecting our children in some way or if they get sick or anything to pray together they to agree on earth and ask for anything it'll be granted I cannot think of the number of times we have used that promise as we prayed together for our home and for our children and to preserve ourselves and of course for the ministry that we had in the church and the one you know that the first marriage was attacked by Satan as soon as they got married the devil came and tried to break them up and he did succeed in breaking them up and here also we read that the purpose of our agreeing together is not just to ask something selfishly for ourselves but also so that we can bind verse 18 we go backwards now to verse 18 where we bind on earth these satanic forces that are trying to bring confusion in a home do you know that it is satanic forces that bring all the confusion in every Christian home I've sometimes told believers I say listen if you find your wife is very upset one day something and she won't talk to you you know what you should do brother go to some corner and bind the demonic forces that are trying to bring that confusion in your home that's what you need to do first is the demons who always try to bring confusion between a husband and wife nobody else and here it says if you verse 18 if you buy what you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and but as I said it begins at verse 18 you can't jump it begins at verse 20 you can't jump to it verse 18 verse 18 is dependent on verse 20 and 19 that's the foundation so if we are united in the name of Jesus Christ is in our midst he's first in our life and we pray together and the answer is then we can bind the satanic influences that come into the home the satanic influences that seek to affect your children Satan what do you read in the Bible as soon as Adam and first of all he tried to separate Adam and Eve and he came between them they started accusing one another you know Adam was accusing Eve that's Satan is the accuser so you can see when Satan the Adam accused Eve that the devil had gotten there already and whenever you point a finger at each other you can see the devil has already come there when you say to your wife or your husband you did that or it's because of you these words that so many husbands and wives say that's the devil the spirit of accusation and that must not be found in our home because then you're inviting the devil to come right in and it affects the children because the devil's aim is to separate if the husband and wife are one he can't come through so he tries to separate them there's a gap between them and then the devil comes in and who is he aiming to attack the children and because he could separate Adam and Eve the very first son was born to Adam became a murderer who made him a murderer the Jesus said in John 8 44 the devil was a murderer from the beginning yeah he's the one who instigated he didn't murder anybody in heaven what did he mean by that we read you let turn to that verse if you don't know it it's in John chapter 8 and verse 44 John 8 44 you are of your father the devil and you he was told the Pharisees who were reading the Bible into a pretty

religious you want to do the desires of your father he was a murderer from the beginning who did he murder he didn't murder any angel he couldn't murder anybody in heaven but the very first couple that God united in marriage the devil came into that and made that first son a murderer and that's because I believe that Adam and Eve didn't put God in the middle of their marriage so the devil is seeking to do that even today I tell you he's seeking to attack every single Christian home any home that seeks to be a witness for Christ you can be pretty sure the devil has got that as a target so I'm gonna hit that home and we must be alert that we don't allow the devil that's why husband and wife must be united so that we don't bring a gap so that the devil can come through and attack our children because his aim is murder anger is a is the root cause of murder you remember Jesus said the old covenant said you shall not murder but I say to you don't get angry anger is the root from which murder comes so it's the devil who makes people angry and it's one of the main things we have to conquer in marriage we will not get angry we'll overcome that and if we do slip up sometimes we ask forgiveness and seek to come to the place where we never get angry I want to encourage all of you who are married husband and wife to pray that you will come to the place where I prayed this prayer myself and God did it in my life that I will never get angry with my wife for one single moment for 365 days of the year and 366 days in a leap year that means never is it possible I know what the devil says no it's not possible what does God say it's possible now it's only a question of whether you believe God or the devil but don't let the devil come in when it says the devil is a murderer from the beginning and that's the first thing he did with Cain the first son was a murderer and now turn and I'll show you this in Matthew chapter 5 what is murder in the new covenant it's what I just mentioned verse 20 Matthew 5 20 your righteousness will see more than the righteousness of the Pharisees what he meant is the Pharisees have an old covenant righteousness you must have a new covenant righteousness and then he said I'll explain what I mean verse 21 the righteousness of the Pharisees is don't commit murder but yours must be more than that new covenant which is in verse 22 that you don't get angry you see that it's right there just like God told the Old Testament people the commandment is don't commit murder he said I say to you verse 22 in the new covenant the equivalent of that is you don't get angry that's why it's so important what would you think of an Old Testament family where husband and wife went around murdering people or sought to murder each other he'd say what I have a marriage that murder we are horrified but do you know that the new covenant equivalent of murder is anger it's Jesus said here that's why we must hate it and that's why we must seek to put it away with all of our heart and I believe it's one thing which I found you know I remember preaching in a place in India there's a gathering of different denominational churches and I spoke on this and one man got up and gave a testimony he says I'm 70 years old and I never heard till now that I shouldn't get angry or that I shouldn't get angry with my wife imagine he was a Christian all in so many years and he never heard in his life there are numerous people who come to our church in Bangalore who said brother Zach we never heard in our life that we shouldn't get angry oh did you read this Bible or some other Bible see Ephesians in chapter 4 why do I say this because I believe this is the one thing which a lot of so-called Christians and spiritual Christians do not take seriously Ephesians 4 verse 31 look at all the different words he uses for anger here it's very interesting different different words verse 31 put away all these things what all should you put away bitterness wrath anger clamor slander malice so many words the Holy Spirit uses to say whatever color you give it whatever label you give it put it away I don't care if all the rest of Christendom doesn't take it seriously brothers and sisters we are a new covenant Church you must take it seriously I decided to take it seriously and you'll never overcome it if you don't take it seriously you'll never overcome it if you don't put Christ as first in your life you will never overcome it if you follow the world's attitude of I love you and you love me let's love one another more no it's not that way I love Jesus Christ supremely and then I love you then we shall come to this place so to those who are not married also I want to say I want to repeat look

for someone who has put Christ first in his life and her life I remember when before we got married I said Lord you got to show me this in some way I want to know the type of book she read and I found it was the same type of books I was interested in reading about the way of the cross and self-denial and putting Christ first and the other thing is you know when we saw that God's purpose was to have godly offspring we looked around and we saw so many Christian homes where the wife would go to work and the children grew up wayward and we said we're not gonna do that we didn't have much I didn't have any income I was not in any Christian organization I was trusting the Lord for my needs we lived extremely simply we had to because we earned so little extremely little and my wife is a medical doctor she could have earned millions of rupees but the day our first son was born she resigned her job and she's never worked after that except helping poor people medically and today we don't regret it because if I weigh in a balance the millions of rupees she could have earned as a doctor on the other side of the balance four sons who are following the Lord and living for him I know which is heavier I have no doubt about it at all if I were to live my life again it would be exactly the same money is not the most important thing I have to keep telling that to married people so many married couples I say already the man is earning enough but still the wife wants to go to work to make more money and more money what what is the end result children are gone astray and I say that shows God saw from the beginning that you are more interested in money than your children and God says okay you will reap what you sow and I've seen that in so many cases and I'm thankful I saw that before I saw that before we got married and we are very thankful that's one thing which is very important it says in Titus we tried to follow scripture and all these things you know not our human understanding Titus it says about women young women Titus 2 verse 4 see everything we understood we get from scripture we believe God's Word is accurate encourage Titus 2 verse 4 encourage young women to love their husbands and to love their children to be sensible and pure and to be workers where to be workers at home we took that seriously kind being subject to the husband why should they be workers at home so that the Word of God is not dishonored verse 5 so the Word of God is not dishonored by your children so that's very important that we put God first and not money first Jesus said that you cannot serve God in money and you have to make a choice sometime in your life if you really want to follow the Lord and especially in marriage I know I know numerous Christian marriages that are completely ruined because money was a very important thing in their life money must be a servant we decided that right from the beginning of our married life we will make money our servant not our master money is not going to dictate how we run our married life and if you have little we live simply you don't need to go to restaurants to go and eat meals every time we are hardly ever in our life gone into a restaurant in India we just cook at home and eat simple food because we want to be careful with our money we don't have much and we're gonna be careful with what we have and of course the greatest joy we had in our life was to start a church meeting in our home and that involved a lot of sacrifice because we used to have four meetings a week and we had small children our oldest son was when we started CFC in our home our oldest son was six years old and Santosh was about two years old and we had another baby about six months old and our fourth son was not even born so we had all these little children but the Lord decided to have a church in our home and he said fine we just let we had gradually 40 50 60 people would come and we had meetings on Wednesday Friday Sunday morning Sunday evening and then we had on holidays we would have all day fasting and prayer that's how we started our church that's how we built the church with fasting and prayer and we'd have times of prayer together like that and seeking the Lord for say from nine o'clock to three o'clock in the afternoon and there were people baptized in the Holy Spirit as we were waiting on the Lord I find so many Christians today have lost all that they don't they think God's gonna do everything for them they sit back lazily and wait for God to do things and God doesn't do and nothing does and they don't seek God the Bible says you will seek him and find him and you seek him with all your heart and we

decided we're gonna seek him with all our heart I'm gonna teach our children to seek him with all our all their heart and if you seek God's kingdom first the other things will be added to us and we found all through our 51 years that whenever there's a need God provided it we never lacked anything at any time we didn't have much but we never lacked anything and we were not dependent on anybody we decided from the beginning that we will support ourselves and we will not be dependent on any church supporting us any such thing we're very thankful for that and that was an example to our children we sought to honor our parents that's one thing we did and I believe you honor our parents we it goes well with us we didn't obey our parents because we were not living under them under them we God we together would seek God's will there are many follow we found many married couples in India when they have a problem they run back to their parents and the parents advises what they follow we decided we definitely listen to anybody not only their parents we listen to godly people but the decision will always be taken by both of us together we never allowed either of our parents to decide anything in our life because it says here a man must leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife it's the first commandment in Genesis 2 24 so we obeyed that I said Lord I'm I'll not let my dad and mom tell me where I should go or what I should do not at all I'll seek their advice but my wife and I are going to decide where we're going to run many times my dad would suggest something else and her dad would suggest something else we respected them we loved them I say thank you dad but we're not going to do that because the Bible says you must leave your father and mother and cleave to your husband to your wife that's what I did and so if Christ was first my wife was second my parents and all were third when we had children the children were third and parents were fourth or fifth that is a scriptural pattern but we found in India I don't know how it is in the US but in India we found so many marriages unhappy because parents were there as important factors in their marriage never love them care for them but never let them run your life and you know India is a culture where even the Hindu culture has got tremendous respect for parents we grew up in that culture and it Jesus was in a Israeli culture where also they were taught to honor their respect their parents but in such a situation the Word of God says the man must leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife so the if the leaving the parents is not perfect the cleaving to the wife will not be perfect so we decided never I can say before God that I never allowed my parents to interfere in our married life we loved them we cared for them but they would not tell us what to do if they told us we would listen to them graciously but we would do what we both felt we should do otherwise we would not be where we are today we would not have accomplished what we did because my dad didn't feel I should quit my job in the Navy first of all and he didn't think once we quit that we should start a house church but I believe my dad's born again he's in heaven today and if he looks down on us I'm sure he'll say son you were right so many times that stand we take will be appreciated by people only years later while you're taking a stand they may think oh these guys are crazy but years later they'll approve and see God was backing them up so it's very very important to ensure that Christ is in the center of your home and Christ in the center of your marriage and that you seek to bring up your children we were very strict with our children we did not allow them to be disrespectful or disobedient we taught them to be respectful to God respectful to parents respectful in the church and they came to the meetings and we are very thankful for what the Lord has done I would say one thing finally ultimately it's not what we do that accomplishes God is the one who does the work but I ask myself why is it that so many Christian homes it's very rare to find a Christian home in the world where husband and wife are really seeking to glorify God they live peacefully with each other and where all the children are following the Lord it's very very difficult and I've traveled to many countries in the world and the reason is very simple God says if you honor me I'll honor you if you don't honor me I will not honor you and that's the reason so I want to encourage all of you seek to honor God we make mistakes but we repent and God will be honored okay now now listen to my better half this meeting is a bit of a surprise for me and I'm going to

say something very personal like a testimony Zach's name was suggested you know in India we don't meet and date and go out together so a pastor or parents or some relatives suggest us to each other so Zach was suggested to me by our godly elder brother you might say like a pastor he was the elder of our church and my first response in my mind when Zach was suggested to me was he is one person I will look up to always and respect and though there were others who have suggested I felt like all my life I look up to I'll be able to look up to him and respect because I had heard him speak and also because I admired the fact that he gave up a good job to follow the Lord and I then I knew that a person who made such a decision to follow the Lord and obey the Lord I can safely trust and follow his decisions so in one sense he's my earthly hero and he continues to be my earthly hero every now and then you know as we grow older we become weaker and we are not like as we used to look when we were young but every now and then I look back to the day when I first saw him and I admired him and that pictures in my mind so that respect is has been with me all these years so when Zach's name was suggested to me I was happy of course we had little obstacles my parents were not very happy about it because they didn't know him and because he had given up his job but God sorted it all out my parents were happy and they arranged the marriage but deep inside in my heart there was one fear and that was Zach was such a good speaker and everywhere you when Zach speaks they may expect me to speak and I didn't want to speak like I'm not the type of person who like to stand up in front and speak I'm so conscious of myself and my everything so that was a big fear in my heart and then I prayed and I said Lord I don't want to speak Zach can speak that's okay I'm happy with everything but don't let me speak in public because it'll be like a competition or husband and wife they are speakers and you know in all the worldly things you see a team husband and wife are the speakers I didn't want that type of thing then the Lord spoke to me so clearly in my heart I can't say in some word he said you don't have to speak Zach is speaking he'll do the speak you know if there's only one mouth he'll do the speaking all you have to do is to support him you be behind him and take care of him he's my servant and he's doing my work all you have to do is just be there take care of him take care of his needs and support him and do all the other things in the home and I was so happy I said Lord I'll do that to the best of my ability I'll take care of all the home things concerning the home and the children and everything whatever you ask me to do and hospitality people come home to see him or talk to him or want to stay with us I'm ready to do everything and I surrendered to the Lord so then another thing which I came across was after we were married we I worked for one year as an anesthesiologist and my entire saving of that year my Zach sent to my dad because we are nine in our family and I was the only one who had finished my studies so he said let your dad have this so like we had so little and this money would have been so helpful to us but he said no we'll send it to your dad that was good then our son came our oldest son was born and I was at home taking care of him and then reality hit me like we couldn't afford to rent our own home we had to stay with Zach's parents in a room of our own they were so kind enough they were retired people but they're kind enough to give us a home a room in their home and we live with them and you know it's not so easy when you share a house with somebody else even if it's your own home and Zach used to travel a lot be out of town so most of the time I was with them and not only I was getting to know Zach but I was getting to know his family and how they run the home and so many practical things and then the baby was born and so sleepless nights and taking care of and you know you try to be careful about the food not to waste and not to make other make demands on other people you try to be as careful as possible so all those are pressures in my life like I was happy but when Zach was out of town it was like it was so empty and lonely for me and I didn't take my spiritual life seriously at that time I used to read the Bible but it was like for namesake I read my Bible and all the temptations like self-pity, discouragement and then on top of that my dad got upset with us for small small things and he didn't want to have anything to do with that so that added to the problems I was facing and I didn't share this with

anyone but that hollowness and emptiness was coming in my life and if the baby cried at night Zach's dad or mom would knock at the door and say why is the baby crying can't you give him some milk or something like that like I was so scared even if the baby cries they shouldn't hear you know you live like that it becomes stressful and I was not careful about my spiritual life it was like the marriage in Kena where the wine got dry there was no wine left my life was like that no spiritual life was rock bottom but God didn't leave me like that some lady who was passing by whom I have never met before she used to go house to house praying with people so she must have heard that who was living in that house so she knocked at the door and she smiled and she said I just want to pray with you so I said sure I mean we sat in the sitting room and prayed but something in her prayer was so fresh and so real which I had lost in my spiritual life and after she left I said Lord I've gone so far away from you let me have a little bit of what that lady has so she said we'll meet again she gave came one more time that time also we were with my relatives so we didn't pray much then she said next week you come to my home so we went I went with them and Zach had come back so I took the baby my oldest son and went to her home and we sat down and we started praying we didn't waste much time no talking and I didn't share anything with her about my personal what I was going through the emptiness or anything so he said let's pray because I had already knew her pattern of praying she didn't talk much so first she prayed and then I prayed then when I said this is my chance I thought in my mind this is my chance my only chance to come back to the Lord because at home if I go there are people here I am away from everybody I want to come back to the Lord so I said Lord I don't know what has happened some big distance has come between you and me at one time you were so close to me I could tell you everything now what has happened between you and me please help me to come back to you and that was a short prayer but I felt like at that time God went down and reached out to me like I was like a little baby on the floor crying and a parent picks it up I felt like God had lifted me up and comforted me and I felt like such a peace and joy which I had never which I had felt when I was born again and brief times in between but this time it was so real and refreshing I felt like God had met with me and I thought at last I'm back to in presence of the Lord and I started praising God I said Lord thank you that you had mercy on me and you didn't let me fall in my you didn't let me die in my wretched state but you lifted me up I was just praising God and God gave me the gift of tongues in praising God now my background is brethren Plymouth brethren they are against speaking in tongues and they think all that is from the devil so I when I started speaking in this language made me so happy but I thought something's happening to me I don't want that I don't want that to speak like that so I tried to come back to English and pray in English but that was like a struggle to pray in English this other language was so like bubbling out of my heart and coming out in torrents of praise and worship I said Lord if you take me now to heaven I'll be the happiest person I'm ready to be with you to such an experience but I have a family I have a child and God touched me and gave me freshness in my life and that's what I want to share with all of dear young sisters wives who may be going through some dryness in in our life Jesus said in the last days the love of many will grow cold love of many towards the Lord the love will grow cold the love for each other husband and wife will grow cold love for our brothers and sisters in the church might grow cold love for our children we may be partial to one a difficult child we don't want to love that child as much as we love the other Jesus said in the last days love of many will grow cold and we have to be watchful and vigilant that our love towards him doesn't grow cold that was one experience like the beginning of my marriage life I'm so thankful the Lord met with me and from that time there's been a steady freshness you know like a lawn where the water just sprinkles and sprinkles and sprinkles I can't say like a big experience like boom God landed met with me or shook me no it's like the slow watering of the lawn always that freshness and I can tell the Lord anything there are so many things which married people face which we think like oh I must go and tell somebody this and I'm facing this but I never feel like that because I say God is my father why should I go and tell this

to somebody who who may not be able to understand but God can understand me and I can tell him and that's what I've been doing and sometimes the things which I tell the Lord are so silly like I think why did I feel hurt about this it's not worth worrying about and the Lord helps me to sort it out and as we heard to my husband speak it's we have to work hard to keep on the freshness in him in our married life it's like we've heard him say that marriage is like a garden which has to be watered and planted a few weeks ago Megan the children and I we went to buy some plants and what fun we had I was doing the grandma duty of taking care of the younger two and Megan was selecting some plants the older children brought some plants is that grandma do you like this one you like this one and we finally made a selection of some plants and we planted the soil was already prepared and she planted and we had such fun planting but you know that particular day after we planted there was that hail storm such a big like rocks the hail fell on the plant and then I thought our marriage is like that we try our best to plant it to beautiful things words of kindness and love and forbearance and unselfishness and forgiving each other and not thinking of bad things in which somebody did to us or said to us not forgetting all those things we take care to plant all those things and the devil is there to destroy it but we have to be vigilant we have to do our part not like those hailstones destroy a plant and thank God not even one plant in Megan's garden died because of the hailstorm and we have to pull out the weeds weeds of suspicion you know most married women can testify sometime in their life there would be some suspicion or some other person is coming and taking my husband's love those are all empty those are all weeds which the devil brings and so there's no place for that pull out all those weeds of suspicion and doubt and expecting something to be done for us and self pity all those are weeds we have to pull out and then it can be a beautiful garden so I praise God thank you all for this little celebration it means so much to us and I'm thankful for my children Megan and my grandchildren they have brought so much joy in our lives when we see them grow now you all are raising a garden with these little plants and I know just as God did for us and now we can see our children grown up and leading and sharing God's word I have faith that all the children here will grow up like that and be witnesses may God protect all of you dear children from all the evil things in the world all the hailstorms and weeds and all and help you all to grow up so you'll be pillars in the church just one thing briefly Matthew chapter 9 it says here the Pharisees verse 11 the Pharisees saw Jesus sitting with the sinners at a meal and said to his disciples why Matthew 9 verse 11 why does your teacher sit with these sinners and look at Jesus reply why do I sit with sinners because it is not those who are healthy who need a physician or a doctor but those who are sick those who have a sense of need in their life Lord I'm sick I need healing in this area he's ready to help them but those who are self-satisfied and I'm okay he ignores them that's why the Pharisees never got the blessing that the sinners got so we must be poor in spirit at all times if we want to possess the kingdom of heaven and that means to have a constant sense of our own spiritual need it's like a poor man in the world a homeless man every day is standing there saying will somebody help me poor in spirit is like that Lord spiritually I'm needy I'm coming to you for help I seek to live like that every day we seek to live like that you know every day and then I find that God meets us and why should we be poor in spirit for one reason we have not yet become like Jesus I have not become like Jesus my wife has not become like Jesus so then we must acknowledge there's an area in our life which we have to become more like Christ and that will never stop until he comes again so if the passion of your life is I want to be totally like Jesus Christ in my behavior my attitude and my thoughts the words I speak the way I speak my words and my motives and everything we will always be poor in spirit because we'll find some area oh I can be a little more like Jesus here I see a need in my life and then also another byproduct of that is we won't have time to judge others the people who judge others are the ones who are not judging themselves they're occupied with the faults of other people so the sick Jesus told the Pharisees you guys think you're healthy that's why I don't come to you these guys know they are sick therefore I go to them so

I see the same principle today Lord I want to be a little more like Jesus and I see some area in my life I want to be like that he'll come to you so I pray that all of you will those of you are single will get really godly partners and have wonderful homes and those of you who are married already whatever your past failure may have been God overlooks the times of ignorance and say Lord from today we want to have a godly Christian home and we want to bring up our children in the fear of God that they will be a testimony in their generation for Christ that should be our desire for every one of the children in RLCF and I tell you have to pray pray for it pray for it together husband and wife for your children we pray for our children and now for our grandchildren regularly prayer does wonders see one of the things we faced in our marriage was sickness with our children with each of them we had something one of them had a major operation where we thought his leg may have to be amputated and a couple of them had problems with their eyes they needed to be operated and there was no one in India had done that operation before there were things like this we faced with our children and accidents and sickness sometimes we wonder why God allows all this but I see that God strengthens the strength God gives us in these situations helps us to comfort and strengthen others because we live in a world where there's a lot of sickness and if we escaped it all we would not have sympathy and care for others who are going through that so we've had a share of all types of things allergies and arthritis and many many things I don't want to make a list of it all but I want to say today that God has seen us through all of it he's been a faithful friend we only asked that God would give us grace and very often healing as well so we always would take our you know like we sing in that song Oh what pain we bear all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer what a friend we have in Jesus all our sins and griefs to bear he's there to bear our sorrows and when we go through these things so we don't want to I've never preached what all other people preach that Jesus will heal every sickness because it is not true and it's a lie which they preach I believe Jesus heals and I've experienced that myself and my wife too but it's not that he heals everybody and I know the times when we've gone through difficult things I remember when the first son was our first son he had a problem with his vision when he was two years old and he we had to take him to a doctor and the doctor kept on putting thicker and thicker and thicker thicker lenses and it's only we had to wear a very thick lens for a long time and he was the only boy in the class it is wearing and people would make fun of him and pull out his glasses and all these type of things he faced numerous things children in school but it was necessary for us and thank God that God didn't sort of insulate us from all these problems and say no no no you'll have a very peaceful life we've gone through so many things and God allowed us to be taken to court because we stood up by religious people for ten years all the way to the Supreme Court so many many things we have gone through and in all those things we can say like Paul we are more than conquerors through him who has loved us and who has carried us through everything we've found the help of God and I say that for your encouragement there's not a single problem that God cannot solve how he solves it is up to him how soon he will solve it or how late he will solve it that's up to him but God has a purpose in every single thing every single trial we've gone through and I don't want to talk about all of them we've had financial struggles sickness struggles opposition tremendous amount of opposition from relatives unbelievers Christians and articles published against us in so many Christian magazines we've come through it all and all I say is God is good all the time he's always with us and he'll be with all of you remember that whatever you may be going through ultimately you'll find that he brings you through in triumph and he'll make you a blessing what you've gone through will be the means by which you can help others when we faced poverty what used to come to my mind was yeah this is what I promised before the Lord when I gave my vow that I'll share his life if it's a life of poverty that's what I promised years ago when opposition came yes I gave my vow that I'll share in that time of opposition when plenty came oh it was good that is what I promised that I'll share so whatever we went through I thought I reminded myself of the vow I had made before the Lord that I would

share those days with him and we have the Lord with us so what more do we need God bless you all

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