

# What is the Kingdom of God

by Zac Poonen

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**Scripture:** Matthew 5:3, Romans 14:17, Hebrews 12:14, Philippians 4:4, Philippians 4:6, Luke 12:32

**Topics:** "Poverty of Spirit", "Pursuing Righteousness and Peace"

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## Description

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## Transcript

So we're thinking of Matthew chapter 5 and verse 3. That's what you've already been hearing from and I'd like to continue on that. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. See in the old covenant, in the old testament until Jesus came, nobody could say follow me.

It is a unique command or calling that Jesus was the first person to say because in the old covenant, even though people like Moses, Elijah, even John the Baptist, the great prophets, proclaimed the truth of God exactly. No one could say all that is true in my life. So they would say, listen to God's word.

Even Moses said, listen to God's word and obey it. None of them said, look at me and see what that word has done in my life. But once Jesus came, he said, follow me.

And he told his disciples to follow him. And the apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11 and in Philippians 3, follow me. And he said, not only me, follow others who are a good example, who are following Christ.

Follow me as I follow Christ. So when it comes to a word like this, blessed are the poor in spirit, it's not enough to understand it intellectually, what it means. Then we will remain in the old covenant.

Our passion must be that that must be true in our life. That I, that you must become poor in spirit actually much more important than whether you can preach on that subject or explain what you heard in this meeting. So we thank God for good examples.

I'm glad you heard brother George Samuel speak earlier. He's a classic example of what it means to be poor in spirit. And we don't have many examples like that, but I praise God for him.

So where a person demonstrates it, that is a message in itself because the life is the message. And if our life does not demonstrate what we hear, then we might as well not have heard it. It's as good as not hearing it.

It's like food we eat, the food is not digested and becomes part of our body. It's no use eating. A lot of meetings are like eating, eating.

And now for the next one hour or so you're going to eat and eat and eat. But if it's not digested in your spirit, you will never become poor in spirit. So your passion must not be to understand what you hear.

Your passion must not be, oh now I can preach this somewhere else. That is all honor seeking and pride. Our passion must be, Lord, I want to be poor in spirit in my life.

Even if I can't explain it, even if I can't preach it, if I can manifest it in my life. And how will you know that you are poor in spirit? Well, you will get the kingdom of heaven because it says the kingdom of heaven belongs to the poor in spirit. Now kingdom of heaven is an expression only Matthew uses.

The other gospel writers used to call it kingdom of God. See Matthew was mostly writing to the Jewish people. So he's comparing earth with heaven.

The old covenant was a kingdom of earth, Canaan's land and defeating the earthly giants. And he was saying now Jesus has come to offer the kingdom of heaven with spiritual giants to be killed in our life, et cetera. So it is the same as the kingdom of God.

So we need to understand what the kingdom of God is. If you were to ask the average Christian, what is the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven? They'll say heaven where we finally go. No, because how can I seek that? Jesus said later on in Matthew 6 and 33, seek first his kingdom.

And let me show you a verse in Luke chapter 12, where it says, blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. And this kingdom of God is something you have to seek first. That's what he saw in Matthew 6, 33, seek this kingdom first, then all the other things will be added to you.

Seek for the kingdom of God as earnestly as all of you sought to get a visa, to get a job in Dubai or Sharjah or Bahrain or Saudi Arabia or anywhere. How earnestly you sought for it. If you can seek for the kingdom of God with 10% of that earnestness, I tell you, many of you would be much more spiritual than you are today.

I believe that is the primary thing. We must seek the kingdom of God first. And if we seek for earthly things, there's nothing wrong in that.

We must earn our living. And I always say, earn the best you can and go wherever you can get a good job and take care of your children and educate them and all that's fine. But if that is first in your life, don't waste your time.

I'm trying to understand Matthew 5, 3. It's a waste of time. It's just intellectual knowledge. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.

But that will come only to those who seek that first. Very important. Combine it with Matthew 6, 33, where he compares it with, you know, living for food and clothing and shelter and everything on earth, which is necessary.

He didn't say don't seek it, but he said, make the kingdom of God first in your life. See, it's like helping people in the world. We help our own family first.

There's nothing wrong in that. If God has given you a family, you take care of your children, their food and education and clothing, etc. If you don't take care of that and try to help all the other children in the world, you're not a good father.

There's nothing wrong in taking care of your children's education and clothing and housing and their future first. And you can still help many, many other people, but it's a question of which is first. And every human being, sensible human being, takes care of their own family first.

In the same way, I want to ask you, just like you care for your children first, rightly, and then others, can you say in the same way that you seek the kingdom of God first, that comes first in your thoughts and mind and life, and then only other things like your job and your health and everything else. If you are like that, and you can sincerely say that not to me, but to God, Lord, you know my heart, I'm seeking your kingdom first in my life. I do seek a lot of other things, but they're all below number 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, but not first.

In my life, every day of my life, the passion of my life is your kingdom. I tell you, then it'll be yours. But if you merely understand what poor in spirit means, you'll never get anywhere.

It'll only be a theory. So I want to say that as a warning. Now, it says in Luke chapter 12, again, verse 31 and 32, speaking about verse 29 onwards, don't seek, it's a command.

Do not kill, command. Do not commit adultery, command. Do not tell lies, command.

Luke 12, 29, do not seek what you eat or what you drink. Do not keep worrying. You see these as commands? The earlier commands I mentioned, the Old Testament people took it very seriously.

I must not kill, I must not commit adultery, I must not murder, and I'm sure you take it seriously too. What about this? Do not, the same God who said do not kill, do not commit adultery, and do not tell lies, and do not bear false witness, also said, do not seek just eating and drinking. Do not seek, do not worry about these things.

But seek his kingdom, verse 31, and these things will be added to you. God will not be proud of you of it. Seek his kingdom first.

It's one of the first things I was gripped by when I was converted at the age of 19 and a half, and I realized that I must either be 100% Christian or live 100% for the world. And I was in the Navy and I was living 100% for my naval profession to go right up to the top. But I realized conversion must be a radical, not playing the fool with God where Christ is number 10 in my list or even number two, must be number one.

And I'm very thankful that from the very first day almost I tried to make number one as I understood it. And I said, Lord, your kingdom is going to be first. No longer do I have any earthly ambitions.

And I have to say the truth before you. I sacrificed all my earthly ambitions and said, Lord, you give me whatever rank I should get in the Navy. I'm not interested.

Before that, my aim was to go to the top. And I said, I'm going to seek God's kingdom. And I tell you, that was 63 years ago.

And God has added to me all the other things without my seeking after it. I can testify the truth of what it says here in Matthew, Luke chapter 12 and verse 31. The other things will be added, added, added without your seeking it.

And I want to pray that that will be true of every one of you. That wherever you may work, whatever your income is, if it can be said about you at the end of your life, at least from the time, at least from the time you were born again, or at least from the time you began to take the Christian life seriously, that this man, this woman, from that time onwards, from a particular time in his life onwards, began to seek God's kingdom first. That was number one in his thinking and in his life.

And here at the end of his life, he didn't suffer. He didn't starve. His family didn't starve.

God added everything needed for him and for his family and took care of his children and everything. All the things that the worldly people seek after and work so hard for, this man got by seeking God's kingdom first. That should be our testimony.

That should be our testimony at the end of our life. If somebody could examine all the private areas of our life, for example, our financial accounts. I felt like that.

If somebody could, at the end of my life, look over all my private life, everything that they should say, here's a man who sought God's kingdom first. We have failed in different places. Those sins are blotted out.

They will not, nobody will ever be able to see them because the Lord says, I will not remember them. And he will not expose our failures to anyone. But our main goal in life is the important thing.

Then we'll find, understand what real poverty of spirit is. And here is a promise attached to this in Luke 12. First of all, we saw the command, seek his kingdom and these things will be added to you.

And it says here, now don't be afraid because you say, if I seek God's kingdom, who will take care of my family? How will I provide my children? How will I educate them? Don't be afraid of these things. Your father has gladly chosen to give you the kingdom. Can you take that as a personal promise today? When you say to the Lord, Lord, you said the poor in spirit only will get your kingdom.

Teach me what that means. Not in theory, not so that I can explain it to others. I don't want to explain it to others.

I want to explain that by my life, what it means to be poor in spirit. And when they see that I have possessed the kingdom of God, they will look at my life and see what being poor in spirit is. And father, I thank you.

You're to say to God, according to Luke 12, 32, you have chosen, not only chosen to give me the kingdom, but gladly chosen to give me the kingdom. It's not sort of reluctantly, God is being, okay, I'll give it to you. No, he's delighted to give every one of you the kingdom, provided you fulfill the conditions.

Be poor in spirit. It's not given to everyone. I'm sorry.

If you don't get the kingdom, it is only one reason. You are not poor in spirit. Anyone who is poor in spirit, that promise in Matthew 5, 3 will be fulfilled.

They will get the kingdom and you will see one day in eternity that the people who got God's kingdom in their earthly life were the people who consistently sought for poverty of spirit, not to understand its meaning, but to live it in their life and experience the reality of finding all the other earthly requirements added to them, not only food and clothing. There's something we need more than food and clothing. You know what that is? Physical health.

To keep fit and strong. Yeah, otherwise how can we serve God? I say that, Lord, how can I serve you if I'm not fit and strong? I don't care how old I am. Even if I'm a hundred years old, I want as much health as you will give me to serve you.

That's all. Not, I don't want health to make money and to become famous in the world. I want health to seek your kingdom.

Give me health for that. Why do we eat food? It is to keep healthy, not because we love food. So God has promised to give us the kingdom.

Take that personal promise. Lord, you promised in Luke 12, 32, you're gladly chosen to give me this kingdom. So if I can receive it only by being poor in spirit, explain to me in my life, even if I can't preach on that subject, what it means to be poor in spirit.

So then the next thing we need to see is, what is this kingdom of God? You know, the kingdom of God can be such a vague thing that we don't understand what it means. What does it mean to seek God's kingdom first? Is it to go to heaven? Everybody wants to go to heaven. Is there any human being on earth, any religion who does not want to go to heaven? Everybody wants to go to heaven.

Is that the kingdom of God? No. Because everybody is seeking. But 90% of people don't get there.

They may be seeking it. What does it mean to seek God's kingdom first? We need to understand clearly what is the kingdom of God. And that is, many Christians, if you ask them, what is the kingdom of God? You read about it, talk about it for so many years.

You claim to be a Christian. You read the Bible, which speaks about the kingdom of God, kingdom of God. What does it mean? And you say, well, I never thought about it.

Really? Well, my brother, sister, then you read the Bible very carelessly. I want to give you one bit of advice now. From today onwards, when you come across a word in scripture, even a phrase that you don't understand, stop there and say, Lord, help me to understand this.

Isn't that the way you teach your children? Supposing they're studying mathematics and they have a problem with multiplication. They struggle, struggle, they can't understand. What do you say? Okay, forget multiplication.

Let's go on to the next subject. Let's do division. You never do that.

You say you're not going to the next subject until you complete multiplication. If you take that attitude to everything you see in scripture, you will be an expert in the Bible in your life by now. You'd be able to bless so many people with your practical knowledge of scripture.

Why is it in our churches, we have so few people who can minister God's word in an anointed way. It's because they don't carefully study the scriptures. If they in their place of work were as careless about their work as the way they study scripture, they would have lost their jobs long ago.

But in their work, they're very careful. They try to understand how can I do this job better? And they study in order to do that job better because they love money. Imagine if you love the kingdom of God like that.

And you began to seek to understand everything in scripture. What a tremendous blessing you could have been to multitudes by today. Well, at least in the days to come, make sure you're going to be that by saying, Lord, I don't want to come to scripture.

I don't understand something. Don't you tell your children that if you read a passage and you don't understand an English word, ask me or go to a dictionary. See what it means.

I've always said that the dictionary for us, the Bible, the dictionary of the Bible is the life of Jesus Christ. That's the dictionary. If you don't understand something in the Bible, go to the dictionary, to the life of Jesus, and you'll see the answer there.

In him is the definition of every word in the New Testament. Kingdom of God, I find it in him. And I also find it in scripture.

Turn with me to Romans 14 and verse 17. Very important verse. I myself, in the early days of my Christian life, yeah, I knew the words.

Seek the kingdom of God first, and all these things will be added to you. And if you had asked me in those days, what are you seeking? I'd say, well, I'm reading the Bible every day, and I'm praying and trying to witness to people. I give out tracts in the buses I go, and I witness to people in my office, and I'm trying to seek the kingdom of God first.

I never knew what the kingdom of God was, and I was so defeated in those early days of my Christian life. For many years, I was defeated. I would fall and get up and confess and be cleansed and continue like most Christians are doing.

And the reason was I did not understand the kingdom of God. I thought kingdom of God is witnessing for Christ and being going to the meetings regularly and reading the Bible and praying and all these external activities. Now, turn to Romans 14 and 17 and see what the Bible says is the kingdom of God.

And I discovered that by telling the Lord, Lord, I don't know. You're telling me to seek the kingdom of God first, but I don't know what it is. I realize it is not preaching and going to the church regularly and reading the Bible and praying.

It is not that. Then the Lord showed me in Romans 14 and 17 what the kingdom of God is. It's got nothing to do with praying and reading the Bible and witnessing.

The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, first of all, and it's not any of these other things. It is three things, righteousness, peace, and joy, and not just righteousness, peace, and joy, but righteousness,

peace, and joy given by the Holy Spirit, which is an altogether different type of righteousness, peace, and joy. Our understanding of these words is very earthly.

The Holy Spirit will give us a heavenly understanding of what righteousness is, that righteousness is not in the external action alone. It is in the motive. It is in the attitude you have to people and not how you behave outwardly towards them.

If you behave very nicely to a person, you're not a good Christian. If your attitude towards that person is not good, if you think bad about someone and you speak nicely to that person, you're not a Christian. You're just a downright heathen because the kingdom of God is in other places.

Jesus said the kingdom of God is inside you, so that's the other thing you need to see. It's what is inside me. What I need is inside me.

I need righteousness, peace, and joy. Righteousness means total rightness in every area of my life. It means I never tell a lie even if I have to save my life.

I'll never tell a lie to gain something. I will never tell a lie to get some more money. I'll never sign a false statement to get a visa or any such thing.

I'll be 100% righteous. That is righteousness. In the world, they don't follow that.

They say it doesn't matter if you cut a few corners and tell a few small lies. Nobody's going to catch you. It's a small thing.

And if you feel you did bad, just tell God to forgive you. It's like telling your son when you go to the examination, cheat. And after the exam is over, ask God to forgive you.

You'll get good marks and God will forgive you also. You see what your son will grow up to be if you teach him that. He'll grow up to be wayward, godless, and go to hell.

No, we're not talking about that type of righteousness. We're talking about a righteousness that is from within in every area that we are conscious of. There are many areas where we are not conscious of what righteousness is.

That God will show us little by little by little. But in the areas that we know, I'll tell you something. If you seek to be righteous in the areas of your life that you know, and seek with all your heart, seek first to be righteous in the areas that you know, God will show you a little more.

It's like the land of Canaan. You first occupy one area, then God will show you something more to occupy, then something more, something more. Like that, they were supposed to occupy the whole land of Canaan.

Our flesh, with all its lusts, is like a land of Canaan with many giants. And first of all, you see something in your life that is wrong. That's like the first area, like Jericho.

You've got to capture that, pull down the walls and occupy that first. That's the area that you see in your life. Maybe it's the way you speak to your wife or to your husband.

You say, Lord, that's the Jericho I must pull down and conquer completely. Then I'll move on to other areas and little by little conquer the whole land that the lusts in my flesh are all conquered. No giant remains dishonoring you in my life.

You know the number of giants that lived in Canaan and God was dishonored by the nation of Israel. Very similar to the number of giants that live in the lives of so many believers today. Even those who are in CFC and talk about new government and all high-sounding stuff, but there are giants ruling in the land.

There are other brothers who can't explain truth so well, who are not great preachers, but who demonstrate in their life humility, purity, love, goodness, peace, joy. They may not be able to preach. They're demonstrating the kingdom of God.

Jesus said, you're the light of the world. You're the salt of the earth. Two examples he used.

What is similar about light and salt? Can you tell me? Think about it. Whenever you read something in scripture, think about it. We must meditate on God's word.

Here's one thing. There are many things perhaps, but one thing is light and salt do not make any noise. There's no noise in your food when salt is there or is not there.

Light, it shines. It doesn't make any noise. If a tube light makes noise, something's wrong with it.

You've got to replace it. A good tube light does not make any noise. And the other thing about light and salt is you will be immediately aware of its presence or its absence.

You come into a room at night and you will immediately know whether there's light or not. Even a blind person can sense whether a room is lit or not. And you taste even a small bit of food in your mouth, immediately you know whether you've got salt in it or not.

Immediately, that is what Jesus meant when he said, you are the salt of the earth, the light of the world. You don't have to shout and make a lot of noise. Your life will be such a powerful expression of light that people who come in touch with you will immediately realize, hey, this person is different.

You know, there are people who have got such a testimony in their place of work or even as students in school. Then others, when others are talking about dirty jokes or something, this man comes there or this boy comes there and they immediately stop. They say, we can't talk about this.

This boy has come or this brother has come. What a testimony that they know that this man is upright and he won't tolerate all this nonsense, all this gossip and backbiting and speaking evil of the bosses. They'll stop when you come because they know you're a godly man or a godly woman.

That's the testimony we must have. Light. There's darkness there and you switch on the light when you come.

When you come into the midst of a group of unbelievers, it must be like switching on the light in the room. As much difference as darkness and light. That should be our calling in our place of work and everywhere.

That is a person who's got the kingdom of God. All like salt. When salt is not in the food, how eagerly you say, come on, please give me some salt.

The great lack is salt even among Christians. There's no taste there. There's no taste of heaven in their life.

Our children must have a taste of heaven in our home. It's no use just instructing them in all the truths of the Bible, the story of Joseph and David and the miracles Jesus did. It's all wonderful.

They can read all the comic Bibles and all that. It's very, very good. It's good to have information, but if they don't taste heaven in the way that daddy and mommy live at home, in the peace and joy in their home, it is like salt without food.

Sorry, no food in the salt. Food without salt. You give food without salt to your children, but that's what we're doing.

If you're not manifesting heaven. So blessed are the poor in spirit for there's the kingdom of God. We must have such a passion to say, Lord, I want to know what it means to be poor in spirit.

Because I want this in my life. I want this in my home. I want this in my life.

This is the only life worth living. So let's turn to Romans 14, 17. Righteousness, peace, and joy.

This is what we will get if we are really poor in spirit. And the great difference between the word righteousness in the old covenant and in the new covenant is this. Let me explain it to you.

The Bible says there is none righteous. Romans chapter three, not even one in the whole world. Nobody's righteous.

The best human being is not righteous. However much better you may think you are than all the other believers in your church. You are not righteous.

That is why Jesus Christ, first of all, forgives every sin that we confess. When we come to Christ, everything is blotted out. But thereafter, the only sin thereafter, after you're born again, when you come to Christ, God doesn't ask you to confess all the million sins you've committed, because none of us can do that.

Become like the prodigal son and say, I've sinned. That's all he said to the father. Forgive him.

The past blotted out. I will not remember your past anymore. Isn't it wonderful to begin like that in the plead sheet? But now the Lord says in 1 John 1 9 for believers, after you're born again, if we confess our sins, God is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Or 1 John 1 7, if we walk in the light as God is in the light, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. What do those two verses in 1 John mean? To walk in the light means you be honest. That's all.

Just be honest. Don't say I did this because he did that. You keep on saying that you will not be forgiven.

It's like children. You say, why did you hit him? Because he hit me. And because he said this, as long as you're justifying your wrong by something that your wife did or said, or husband did or said, or somebody else said, I'll tell you in Jesus name, your sin will not be forgiven.

It will remain on your head forever. Your sin will be forgiven when you take the blame, no matter what other people did. Whatever way other people and other people treat me has no, does not give me any

excuse to respond in a sinful way.

No, I cannot give that excuse to God. He spoke to me like this, or she spoke to me like this. That is why I responded like that.

That is little children who don't know anything about God's ways. For us, if we confess our sins, not somebody else's sins, children are always confessing what somebody else did to them. We confess our sins.

God is faithful and righteous to cleanse us from all of that. But what you don't take the blame for, you say, I did this because he did this. It will never be forgiven till the day comes in your life where you take the blame saying, Lord, it's me, Lord.

It's me. A very, very important lesson. It's something we should learn the day we are born again.

But we are not taught this. Unfortunately, we don't have good teachers. In churches today, because they themselves are not experienced.

But we thank God that we can hear a lot of good teaching in CFC from many brothers. The number one is be honest. What did David say in Psalm 51 when he confessed his sin of adultery? Lord, you desire truth in the inner part.

Honesty inside is what it means to walk in the light. Then the blood of Jesus will cleanse you completely. So that's the first step in righteousness.

And then in our daily walk, we need the power of the Holy Spirit to help us to walk in righteousness. When God cleanses us through his blood, he, Christ himself becomes our righteousness. That's the only way we can approach God.

We read in 1 Corinthians 1 verse 30, Christ is our righteousness. They didn't have that in the Old Testament. You think it is an easy thing to come before a holy God? The Old Testament people did not even dare to call him father.

They were scared to come anywhere near him. They would shut their eyes and say, Oh God, even the angels shut their eyes before God. Have you seen that in Isaiah chapter 6? The seraphims, they cover their faces, cover their wings.

In heaven, those seraphs who never sinned are covering themselves. And yet I'm surprised how so many believers come into God's presence in such a casual way, as if he's an old friend of theirs and they can put their arm around. No wonder there's no progress in their life.

There is no reverence for God, the fear of God, which means the reverence of God is not there. That's why they never experienced this first part of the kingdom, righteousness. So if you are really poor in spirit, you will experience this righteousness because the kingdom of heaven, the father gladly gives the kingdom to those who are poor in spirit.

I'm just trying to show you the great need for poverty of spirit. That's where we begin. See, if a doctor can convince a patient, you need to take this medicine, otherwise you'll die.

He will take it. But so many illiterate people don't take the medicine in the villages and all because they don't believe it's so important. It's like surgery.

If a doctor says, unless you get the surgery, your cancer will not be removed, you'll die. If he's convinced about it, he'll submit to any painful surgery and even spend the money for it. So when we are convinced about something, then we submit to any painful experience.

So when you say, Lord, I don't have this righteousness. I want this righteousness, which is inward. And I want to know what it is for Christ to be my righteousness.

And I come before God is so holy that even the seraphs cover their faces, that reverence. Dear brothers and sisters, I'm sorry to say, I have found very, very few people in my life who have a reverence for God. We approach God as so casually as if he was an old friend of theirs.

And no wonder their lives are so shallow and they're not a blessing to others. There's not a powerful anointing. There's not a fire in their lives.

And even if there is a fire, it disappears very quickly. If you have a fire in your life, it must burn more and more and more and more and more. Yeah, that's how it is.

The anointing must increase as we grow older. And so righteousness is not something static. It's more and more and more.

We are clothed with the righteousness of Christ. And we seek that righteousness till the giants are killed one by one in our flesh. And more and more our life glorifies God.

It's righteousness. And then it says the second part of this kingdom is peace, peace with God and peace with men. This is the kingdom of God where I know in my heart every moment that I'm at perfect peace with God.

I can look into my heavenly father's face and say, dad, I know you're happy with me, but we must long for that. Do you have a longing? I've many times I've thought of that word that the father said to Jesus at his baptism. This is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased.

And I've said, Lord Jesus, you've called me to follow you and walk in your footsteps. I want to hear the father say that about me. I said, father in heaven, can you say that about me? This is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased.

I want that from you. I don't care what anybody in the world thinks about me. I'm not interested in what people think about my preaching of my Christian life.

I want you to say about me that you're well pleased with me. What's the use of the commendation of everybody in the world? If God cannot say that about us, dear brothers and sisters have this longing that God, your father can look at your life, every aspect of your life, the way you speak, the way you think, your attitude towards people, your attitude to money and everything else, the way you love your enemies and bless those who curse you. When he sees all that, that he can look at your life and say, this is my son.

This is my daughter in whom I'm well pleased. You cannot live the Christian life the way God wants you to. Then you'll have peace with God.

Peace with God, because you know, God's face is smiling at you all the time. Never angry with you. Wonderful way to live and peace with all the others.

When you have peace with God, it results in peace with everybody that you never want to have a fight with anybody else. Never. Our aim must be not a single time we fight with our wife at home, not even once in a year or with any human being or with anybody in the church.

You know, I've used this example. It takes two hands to make a sound. You can't do it with one hand, no matter how much you try.

So here are two people clashing. That's a fight. The peace is lost.

Think of this as husband and wife. They're coming for a clash. Or you with somebody in the office.

Or you with a taxi driver or somebody who cheated you. They're coming for a fight. And you refuse to fight.

No. There's no noise. There's no fight.

Because one person refused to fight. That is pursuing peace with all men. You know, husband, wife, anyone.

Maybe the husband says, no, I'm not going to fight. Or the wife says, no, I'm not going to fight. There'll be no sound.

There'll be no anger. There'll be no bitterness. There'll be no clash.

Zero. There will not even be a wrong attitude in thoughts towards one another. You may not be physically fighting with your husband and wife.

But you may be inwardly having wrong attitudes. Oh, why is she like this? Oh, she is so selfish. And she's always thinking about herself and not about me.

That is a fight. It's a fight in your mind. You may be controlling it on the outside.

Get rid of it, brother. Be poor in spirit and seek God's kingdom first. Peace.

The kingdom of God is peace at home and with all people. I can't help it if other people want to come and fight with me. But I'm going to refuse to fight.

Sorry, you can wave your hand as much as you like. I'm not going to fight. I don't even fight with people about doctrine.

I've had people come to my house who want to argue about some doctrine that I preach. They say it's all wrong. I say, OK, you can believe what you like.

If you want to understand the truth, I don't mind spending hours sitting with you and explaining the truth from scripture. But if you come to argue with me, brother, I will not argue. I've actually said this to people.

Some brother from somewhere will come from some Pentecostal church trying to tell me that everybody should be healed without medicine or some crazy doctrine like that. And I say, I'm not going to argue with you. I believe in healing, but I don't believe that we should not take medicine.

And then he begins on this and I say, no, I will not discuss it. I'm not going to argue with you. Then I tell them, listen, to be at peace, let's leave the subject and let's talk about cricket.

You and I are both Indians. We want the Indian team to win, right? Then we can be at peace. That's the only way to do it.

I'm not interested in arguing. Biblical subject means argument. I will not argue or fight with people.

You must have a passion for peace. Sorry, no sound. I will not fight.

You can shout and yell as much as you like. Third thing, joy in the righteousness, peace and joy. Joy is something which only you know whether you have or not.

A lot of people who smile, you have no joy. I'll tell you that. If you have joy in your heart, you may have burdens from God's work, burden for the spread of the gospel, burden for the building of the church.

I have that all the time of the building of the church in different places. But I have joy in my heart because I know my life with my father is clear. I don't live in anxiety and fear whether God will let me down.

It's like whatever may happen, there will be no anxiety. There'll be joy all the time, all the time. That is the kingdom of God.

And if you don't have it, what should you say to yourself? Lord, I don't have this righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, which is the kingdom of God, which proves that despite all the messages I've heard, I'm not poor in spirit. Because if I was poor in spirit, I would get the kingdom of God. You promised it.

Is it possible that God, Jesus lays down a condition, say you fulfill the condition, I'll give it to you? Is it possible that you fulfill the condition and Jesus doesn't give it to you? Here's the condition. You be poor in spirit. The Lord says, I'll give you a kingdom.

It's like a contract. You sign a contract with somebody and if the other person is righteous, he'll keep the contract. But you must keep your side.

You be poor in spirit. Jesus says, I'll give you the kingdom. And the kingdom is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

And you don't have it. Why didn't the Lord give it to you? Face up to it. You are not poor in spirit.

Then seek God. Say, Lord, explain to me. Don't let me just go through a conference on subjects studying poor in spirit and I still don't get righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

If at the end of this conference, you're not really had a passion to get righteousness, joy and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, brother, you're just trying to understand theory, sister. It's no use filling your notebooks or your mind with theories of what these things mean. It must be in our life, a life that is righteous in secret and in public, where you're absolutely honest, where you pay your taxes righteously, where you don't cheat anyone, where if you borrow something, you return it as soon as you finish using it, total righteousness that people can look at the private part of your life and say, there's nothing wrong in that person.

And you can look at your life all the time and find there's a man who's at peace in his heart, always at peace with God, because as soon as he slips up, he immediately confesses it to God, takes the blame, doesn't put the blame on anybody else. And he's always seeking to be at peace with others. You know that verse, which is pursue peace with all men.

Let me show you that verse in Hebrews in chapter, very important verse, Hebrews chapter 12, verse 14, pursue peace with all men without which you will not see the Lord. How many of you believe this verse that if you do not pursue, not ask, asking is different, pursue after peace, you will not see the Lord. That means peace with everybody I know from my side.

He may not want to be at peace with me. As I said, he'll try to fight with me, but I'm refusing to fight, sorry. My withdrawing from there is pursuing peace.

Let him yell and scream and shout and whatever he likes, whoever the other person is. What does it mean to pursue peace with all human beings? There's no human being on the earth with whom you should have an inward conflict. You lie down at bed anytime and think about somebody who has harmed you and says, this is what I'll tell him when I see him next.

This is what I'm going to do. That brother-in-law of mine who cheated me of my property. When I see him, I'll give him a piece of my mind.

Are you a Christian or a heathen? Thinking such thoughts when you lie down in bed, dear brothers and sisters in our CFC churches, there's a great need for repentance. Repentance of the thoughts that go on in our mind when we are lying down in our bed at night. Thoughts which are not godly.

Thoughts that you'd be ashamed if Jesus publicly exposed that to other people. Pursue peace with all men and say, Lord, give me such a life where when I lie down in bed at night, I don't have a single bad thought about any human being in the world. No matter what harm anybody has done to me, I'm going to pursue peace.

Let them shout and yell as much as I like. My hand is withdrawn. I will not fight back.

That's what it means. You'll have a more peaceful sleep as well. You'll sleep better.

Many people don't sleep because they're thinking of various things. This person cheated me. That person, my boss in the office is doing this.

This is what I'm going to tell him and all that. Why don't you tell the Lord instead of telling your boss first. Go and cast your burden upon the Lord and he will sustain you, the Bible says.

It's a great promise in Psalm 55 verse 22. Cast your burden upon the Lord and let him sustain you so that you don't have to worry about it. Pursue peace with all men.

The word pursue, I pictured it like this in my mind. You know, in our buses in India, the buses don't have any doors, many of the old buses anyway. You can get into the bus even when it is moving.

I've had many experiences when I had to catch buses in different places. I'm trying to get to the bus stand in time. When I reached the bus stand, I see the bus is just about to leave.

It's already moved. I run. I've done this many times.

I run to catch the bus and get onto it. I don't want to miss it. Maybe that's the last bus going to that place.

I don't want to miss it. I run, and many times I've had that experience of running and getting onto the bus. And I say, Lord, I want to pursue peace with all men like that.

It won't be waiting for me at the bus stand. No. Peace will not be waiting for me.

It's leaving. I have to run after it, catch it, and get on. Otherwise, I'll miss it.

That's been the picture in my mind whenever I read this verse. Pursue peace with all men. Otherwise, you'll miss it.

You'll miss the bus. I want to ask you, every one of you, a direct question. Answer it to yourself.

Do you pursue peace like that? Running to catch the bus with your wife, first of all, always, every day, even if she's as bad as the devil himself. Do you pursue it like that with your husband? Even if he's an evil man, do you pursue like that with your neighbors, with your relatives? Do you pursue it like that with your mother-in-law? Maybe she's very hard and evil to you. It doesn't mean you have to also be hard and evil to her.

You're a Christian. Maybe she's not. Or to your relatives who have cheated you of some property or treated you badly in any way.

These are the practical situations where we've discovered whether we are poor in spirit or whether we just heard some messages on being poor in spirit. Let there be born in your heart a passion, a passion produced by the Holy Spirit that you are determined at any cost to be poor in spirit, even if you can't explain it. So that the kingdom of God becomes your possession.

Your father is delighted to give you the kingdom, we read in Luke chapter 12, where righteousness becomes my possession. Righteousness, I can look into God's face with a clear conscience because every known sin has been settled. Every debt has been cleared to the best of my ability or I'm clearing it.

That's how it should be. We should strive. I want to say a word about debt.

There may be some situations where you have to get into debt. I have tried my best to avoid debt all my life. I'm 82 years old today and I can stand before God and say, Lord, I thank you that I never owed one rupee in my life to anyone at any time.

Even in the early days when my wife and I was struggling financially, we were extremely poor, so poor that we could not even rent a house. I was serving the Lord. I was very rich when I was in the Navy.

But once I left that, I was very, very poor in the first three, four years of my life. And even after we struggled, it was a good experience for us to learn how a lot of people in India live because I had not experienced that in the Navy. So God allowed me to experience for a number of years in our married life, how other people in India live.

It's a good experience for you if you go through some times of poverty and struggle. Otherwise, you have no experience of how some of your fellow countrymen live. And because God took us through that for many years in the early part of our marriage, I was able to have a ministry to the villages, go down to some of the villages in Tamil Nadu.

They are so rock bottom poor. I'm so happy that I can minister to them because I can tell them, brother, I know what you go through. I've been through it myself.

And in those times, we decided, both my wife and I, we will never borrow even one rupee from anyone. If we don't have the money, we live with what we have. We can live without a washing machine.

That's how we lived for many years. My wife washed the clothes just like Jesus washed his clothes. How did Jesus wash his clothes? We didn't have a washing machine.

Who said that you have to have one? How did people live for 5,000 years on this earth? So many things we simply needed. By all means, if you have the money, buy it. Finally, we got one when we had the money.

But when we didn't have the money, we didn't have it. I rode a scooter for 42 years because I could not afford petrol to run a car. I said, fine, who said I should have a car? Man, if you can afford it, have two cars, three cars.

There are many people who need for their family. But if you can't afford it, I'll never get into debt. No.

I said, fine. These are the little things, my brothers and sisters, that God sees, whether you are totally righteous. And if he sees that, the anointing that he put upon your life will be amazing.

It'll be absolutely amazing. You'll be a blessing to thousands and thousands and thousands of you will be a blessing to thousands of people if you determine with all your heart to seek righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit from now on. You say, Lord, I've bundled up so much in my past life.

Maybe some of you have already been a blessing, but it could have been 100 times more. Maybe you're satisfied. Yeah, I have been a blessing to people.

It could have been 100 times more if you have pursued righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit much more earnestly. So I haven't really spoken about poverty of spirit in this message. I've spoken about the kingdom of God, where Jesus said, blessed are the poor in spirit, they'll get the kingdom of heaven.

And I'm just trying to show you, if you haven't got this, you're not poor in spirit. Because the first thing we need is to create a hunger for something. You know, in the world, they know that when a company is advertising some product, the first thing they do is they make you feel that you really need it.

Then only they advertise the product. What's he's advertising the product if you don't believe you need it? The principle of advertising is make the customer feel that he desperately needs it, he cannot live without it. And then they will themselves come and buy it.

That's what I'm seeking to do. Before I explain what poverty of spirit is, to help you to see how desperately we need it, how we don't have it. Because if we had it, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.

Righteousness is theirs, inward righteousness, outward righteousness, peace with all men, and perpetual peace with God is theirs. Joy, all the time, joy is theirs. Rejoice, always, not most of the time.

Many people misread the scripture. People say there are people who are canceling out portions of scripture nowadays. They don't obey this verse or that verse.

You know, sometimes CFC people say these other sisters, they don't wail their heads. And they say the Bible says we must wail our head. I believe every woman must wail her head.

When she prays or prophesies, we insist on that in every CFC church, not to come and sit in the meeting. They can sit in the meeting as long as they like without wailing their head. But if they're going to pray or prophesy, the Bible says they must wail their head.

When I say that's not all there is to the kingdom of God. What about these other promises? The kingdom of God must be ours. What about rejoice always? That is also a command in scripture.

Philippians 4.4. If you insist that somebody should wail their head when they pray or prophesy some woman, they can insist. What about you, brother? Philippians 4.4 says you must rejoice always. That woman can tell you, you're telling me to wail my head in the meeting, but you're not rejoicing always.

You tell me I'm not obedient to scripture. You're not obedient to scripture either. What do you answer to that? We are so selective.

We look at verses that other people are not obeying and try to find fault with them. Why not read the scripture more for ourselves and leave other people alone? Unless you're a prophet. Prophets have to expose the sins of others.

But 99% of us are not prophets. Seek your own. Say, Lord, where have I failed? Go to Philippians 4.4 and say, Lord, I'm not rejoicing always.

Then go to the next two verses after that. Philippians 4.6, be anxious for nothing. Do you know the meaning of nothing? Zero.

Ask your children what nothing means. Be anxious for nothing. Go to God and say, Lord, I'm so worried that somebody else is not obeying scripture.

You know, I myself am not obeying scripture. I'm anxious for so many things. Why am I not getting this kingdom of God, which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit 24 hours a day? It must be because I'm not poor in spirit.

Once you've understood that, you'll have such a passion to understand poverty of spirit, not intellectually, but practically in your life. And the proof of it will be righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit will be yours. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.

Fear not, little flock, Luke chapter 12, verse 32. It is your father's good pleasure to give you this kingdom. It's your father's good pleasure to give it to you.

The only condition is you must be poor in spirit. See, when somebody is giving you something and you don't stretch out your hand, you can't give it to him. You're not going to drop it on the ground.

Somebody stretches out his hand to give you a gift. You're stretching out your hand, he's receiving it. Who's going to receive the kingdom of heaven? Here it is, the poor in spirit.

So ask yourself why you haven't got it and say, Lord, I haven't understood poor in spirit yet, but it's clear to me today that I'm not poor in spirit. If you've come that far, you've made a lot of progress in this conference, because the next step will be to understand what that means, because I want to possess

God's kingdom. Okay, let's bow our heads and pray.

So when our heads are bowed in prayer, remember this, there is no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus. God's word did not come to condemn you today, but to say to you, my son, my daughter, come up higher, come up higher. Like the Lord told John in Revelation chapter four, come up higher.

Don't live in that low level anymore. You're my son, you're my daughter. I don't want you to live at the level of other people in the world.

Come up higher. So the Lord has not come to condemn us, but to lift us higher. But we must respond to him and say, Lord, I want to come up higher.

I want to possess this kingdom, which you give to the poor in spirit. Help me to experience that poverty of spirit or begin to experience it by the time this conference is over, so that this conference will not be a waste and will not be just something that I discovered something to talk about or preach about, or that I understood in theory, but which I understood in practice. Heavenly Father, we don't have to talk much to you if our heart is longing.

You know our heart's longing. Please meet with us, everyone who is sincerely seeking. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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