

Why God Gave My Wife A Blessed Ministry

by Zac Poonen

This sermon reflects on the life of Annie, highlighting seven key areas where she demonstrated faithfulness and sacrifice: her growth in ministry, choice of husband, adaptation to changing circumstances, role as a mother, service as a sister, mother, and doctor, relationship as a mother-in-law, and joy as a grandmother. The speaker emphasizes the importance of appreciating and honoring one's spouse and family, acknowledging the sacrifices and love they offer.

Scripture: Proverbs 31:10, Ephesians 5:25, Colossians 3:23, 1 Timothy 5:8, Titus 2:3, Proverbs 31:28, Psalm 127:3, Proverbs 22:6, 1 Peter 3:4

Topics: "Faithfulness in Family", "Sacrifice in Service"

Description

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Transcript

I want to say a few things. First of all, there are seven areas where Annie was, I've seen her. One, how she grew in her ministry.

And a lot of people would like to say wow. You know, once upon a time I was a rejected heretic everywhere, but unfortunately now a lot of people around the world know me, and so it's a fame I don't like. My savior was despised and rejected and that's the way I want to go.

But a lot of people see me in the pulpit and then they say, boy, how lucky to be the wife of such a man who gets such prominence. And the ministry that she has had through the years, I want to tell you, it didn't come through Bible study. That's what I want to tell you today.

How her ministry came. First of all, it was I'll tell you seven things. First of all, it was as a young sister, 16 years old.

She was gripped when she went to a leprosy hospital. She traveled all the way in a train all the way to Maharashtra. Those days it was safe for 16-year-olds to go in a train from Coonoor back and there she saw these people with lepers with their hands all and she had a great longing to serve them in some way

and there was no lady doctor that had ever come to that leprosy hospital because people don't like to work with leprosy.

There was no cure for it those days. So she decided to be a doctor. Think of that.

Why do people want to be doctors today? You know the reason. Why did she want to be a doctor? There begins the secret of a ministry. If you have that type of desire, God will give you a ministry too.

There is no partiality with God. All are the same in the choice of a profession. And when she graduated, almost everyone in her class did the American college board exam and went off to the United States.

She went to Maharashtra to an out of the way village which was infested with cobras and they sent all the lepers there. And she worked in the mission there. That's number one.

Secondly, in her choice of a husband. Many of you have chosen husbands. Did you ever choose a man who had no income and no bank account? Anybody here? Would you ever choose such a man who was bald and the only thing was he was one who loved the Lord.

Many of you have parents. Would you give your daughter to such a man? Even if she loves the Lord, how is he going to support? Here was a doctor who could make thousands of rupees, hundreds of thousands of rupees. I don't think there is a single girl here who has chosen a man who did not have an income of any sort.

Who was not a part of any Christian organization. Who had no bank balance and no income. So it's in the choice of a husband.

That's the thing that God saw. From that comes a ministry. And it's very interesting.

I'll tell you a little story. When she was in her final year in medical college, her finest subject was obstetrics and gynecology. And she expected to get top of the class marks for that.

But she had to finish her written exam and go to Madras, where Chennai, those days it was called Madras, where they did the practical test where you have to examine a patient. And each, all the students from Vellore went to Madras those days. And her name, because it began with A, she was one of the first on the list to go to see the professor who was going to examine her.

There were two of them, one man and one woman. And the woman was a non-Christian. And she saw Annie without any jewels, in simple white clothes, simple clothes, and she knew this is a Christian.

And she hated people who came from CMC Vellore. And she lambasted her. The medical test, practical test is only five minutes.

And for five minutes, she just hit out at her saying, you think, you people think you're too clever and you think too much of yourself. And I don't know what all she said. Didn't even give her a chance to answer those practical questions.

Not one medical question. You're good for nothing, this, that, and the other, and the other. And didn't allow the other man also to ask a question.

He said, Madam, can I answer the question? No. And the bell rang. Go.

No question. Result, failed. Failed in her best subject.

So she came back to Vellore, naturally depressed as a young girl who was, what, 21, 22 years old. And she realized that where she had never failed in her entire career, she used to come first in the school. And now, and for the first time in her life, she's failing in her best subject.

And how could she tell anybody, this person never asked me any questions. Was just upset with me because I was a Christian. See, these are the type of things that God has seen.

But do you think God would leave such a person without a reward? So because of that, she had to stay three more months in Vellore. Because she failed. And in those three months, I came to Vellore.

And Brother Baksing suggested this marriage, and I met her. Otherwise she would have been in Maharashtra. You know, I told her, I wanted to see that non-Christian lady doctor and thank her so much for failing my wife so that she could be three more months in Vellore so that I could meet her.

What does it matter if you lose three months in your career if as a result of that, God uses that very event. You know, God uses the crucifixion of Christ to be the greatest thing that happened. The greatest thing that the devil did became the greatest thing that God did.

I hope you're encouraged by that. Don't get discouraged when other people reject you because you're a Christian. You suffer for the gospel sake.

God has something wonderful for you. And you know, she also said to the Lord at that time when Brother Baksing proposed me to him, Lord, I'm not a preacher. Here's a person who can preach so well, I can't preach.

And the Lord said to her, you don't have to preach. This is exactly what the Lord said to her. He is my servant.

You only have to take care of him. That's all. And that's what she's done for 49 years.

It's going to be 50 years in July. And then the third thing, that was in choice of husband, third is as a wife. Now every wife, everyone when they get married, I'll tell you what every wife looks forward to.

To have a home of her own. Till then she was living with her parents. Every young girl, I'm sure all of you got married, look forward to have a home of your own.

Where now you're married, even if it's a one room house, to be the queen of the house. I was so poor and I would not go to rich churches. I would not join any organization.

I could not afford to rent a house in Vellore. What do you do when you can't afford to rent a house? Well, fortunately my parents, my father was a retired pensioner living on 350 rupees a month, but he had a house. And I told dad, I don't want any money from you, but he said you can stay.

He had one room spare in that house. And my wife and I, as soon as our marriage was over, we straight away moved in to live with my parents, her in-laws. How many of you girls who get married look forward to that? To live with your in-laws from day one.

I could live there easily because they were my parents. And you know how long we took before I had a house of my own? Four years. Moses stayed 40 years with his in-laws and God broke him.

Jacob stayed 20 years with his in-laws and God broke him. Annie stayed 4 years without a house. If you knew that, how many of you would marry such a man? You wonder, boy, what a ministry she has.

She is writing books. This is where it came from, not Bible study. She knew that and she willingly accepted it.

If there was no other way, Lord, if this is what you have arranged for me, well and good, I accept it. And at the right time God gave us a house in which we lived and in that house we used to have our relatives come and stay with us almost from the beginning of our marriage. We served them.

We served them. A brother came and stayed, a sister came and stayed, different brothers came. And my parents would come every year for 2 or 3 months.

When it was hot in Chennai, they would come and stay with us. Every year, from 1972 to 1982, 10 years. How many of you can say, your father-in-law and mother-in-law have come and stayed with you every year for 10 years, for 2 or 3 months with you? Most daughters-in-law are sick and fed up with having their mother-in-law in their home.

Some of you have never had your mother-in-law stay with you. It's too much for you. And you teach your daughters also never to have their mother-in-law with them.

God bless you, I'm not here to judge you. But don't expect a ministry. Don't think ministry comes by, Oh, I know all about the new covenant, I can speak the right language.

It comes through brokenness, in Moses' case with the father-in-law, in Jacob's case with the father-in-law. Through brokenness, through the crushing. We can talk about crushing.

But this is what it means in practical terms. I'm just telling you. This is what makes me appreciate her.

And then, these changing circumstances. You know, we had very little. She never once asked me to buy her a sari.

Never asked me for anything. We lived, she used to wash clothes because we couldn't afford a washing machine. She'd wash clothes with her hands.

Visitors would come and stay with us, she'd wash clothes with her hands. We had many, many foreigners staying in our house. You know who washed their clothes? They thought we had a washing machine.

We didn't tell them. And we washed them with our hands. That's how we served people for all the years from the time CFC started, right up to 1975 to 1989.

We had, every year, we had foreigners come and stay with us. We had young brothers who would stay on after the meeting, stay on in our house. She always served them.

Sometimes we had, you know, this is the way she was. And then I want to say a fourth thing. As a mother, in the way she raised her sons.

She gave up her job. And she had to work for one year in the CMC hospital because she had a bond. And all that one year salary she gave to her father, we agreed to give it, because she had eight younger children in school and college.

And from that day onward, she never worked for money. And in all these 49 years of her marriage, she's never earned one rupee as a doctor. But she's served hundreds, I don't know, perhaps thousands, women and children.

And the reason was that she wanted to devote her time to the children. And because I was also traveling. I remember one time when one child got chicken pox, the next one got chicken pox.

There were three chicken pox children at home. And I wasn't even at home. There are times when I've traveled away from home for five or six weeks.

Some of you are disturbed if your husband goes away for two or three days. I was away for six weeks serving the Lord, not making money. No.

Serving the Lord in different places. And she stayed at home. Never once did she tell me, don't go.

That's how our ministry, I'm just telling you how a person gets a ministry. By spending her time and she would be with her children and take care of the children and sit down with them and teach them when they're subjects in school and encourage them all along. An exceptional example as a mother.

All mothers sacrifice. But I don't know how many of you have sacrificed with your husband away for long periods not to make money. I mean a lot of husbands go away to Gulf, Dubai and all to make money.

That's different. This was going away to villages and here and there to help the poor. And being a husband in your way for many weeks on end.

So the ministry comes out of that. And then, that's so. As a young sister in profession, secondly as a young sister in choice of a husband, third as a wife in adjusting to changing circumstances, fourth as a mother in the way she raised her sons and fifth as a sister and a mother and a doctor to many in CFC through the years.

Right from the time the church was meeting in our house and we didn't have lunch every Sunday because there was no place for all that. After the meeting everybody went home. But sometimes people would come from far away places like Jalahalli or something unexpectedly and we couldn't think of sending them home.

So Annie would, they were total strangers. Annie would provide them food at home and I realized only after they went away that Annie herself missed that meal because she had to feed that person. We were not so rich.

We had to just, whatever little there was. And we used to have sometimes four meetings a week right in our home. That'd be a meeting Sunday morning, Sunday evening, Wednesday and Friday.

That's how we started. We'd have fasting and prayer the whole day, nine o'clock to three o'clock. Those people who were there in the 1975-76 know that this is how CFC was born.

And you can understand some of you mothers who get upset if there's a little meeting in your home once a month. This is how it was four times a week. And we had little children.

Small children. Sunil was not even born. The oldest, Sanjay, was, 1975, was seven years old.

Six years old. That's how, six years old and then two years old and one year old and then later on Sunil and with these children. And then there would be young girls without any sense who would come and come early and disturb and go and go into the kitchen and say, what did you cook today? And here's Annie trying to bring up these three children.

And I had to endure all this. I remember one man, he had a problem with his, his wife couldn't get along with his mother and so they're staying in the house. He came and told the mother to stay with us for, CFC person, for a whole day because his wife couldn't get along with her.

I said, okay. Then sometime the daughter had a problem. Daughter comes and stays with us.

These are the type of things we face in the early church. We don't regret it one bit. Because I see the result of that today in the, how God has blessed the ministry.

Now I'm just trying to tell you that don't think this is just a matter of understanding the new covenant or, you know, saying I know all about it and being able to share clever things on Sunday morning, bright ideas from the scripture. There's so much of that. It's very different.

Real ministry is not by all this. It's by quiet sacrifice behind the scenes. And the number of people who, you know, when she spends a whole day before we travel to Tamil Nadu sorting out the medicines that she has to give to all those poor people there.

That's how we go. And I know in Tuticorin and all they used to say, if you want to identify who's sister Annie is getting down from the train see one person with a small suitcase and another big bag. That big bag will be full of medicines.

That's sister Annie. So that's how she's been a sister and a mother, like you heard, to many people and a doctor to many. That's the fifth thing.

And sixthly, the next stage in her life was to be a mother-in-law. That's a tough one. Because the world is full, full, full, full of examples of mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law who just can't get along with each other.

They just can't stand the sight of their daughter-in-law or their daughter-in-law can't stand the sight of the mother-in-law. No, don't tell me. They tell their husband, your mother is coming.

And Annie and I decided in the new covenant, we're going to overcome that. That doesn't depend only on her. It depends on the daughters-in-law.

And I want to say we've had daughters-in-law right from 2004 when Sunil got married and every year thereafter, like dominoes, the others fell and all got married. And all these years, for 13 years, we've had daughters-in-law. And it's not only Annie.

It's been the way the daughters-in-law have reacted. We don't call them daughters-in-law. We call them daughters-in-love.

L-O-V-E. And all these years, the wonderful relationship that our four daughters-in-love have had with Annie, it is both sides. You know in a relationship, it's not only one side.

She has to be a very wise mother-in-law and they have to be wise daughters-in-law. And I want to say we have always enjoyed our time in every single home that we've been. We've decided in our life to prove that in the new covenant, there is no such thing as a difficult mother-in-law, daughter-in-law relationship.

If you can't overcome that, I say, forget about talking about the new covenant. Go back into some other dead church and preach the old message. We're not here preaching a message.

We're preaching a life. A life that overcomes all these other things that people say can never be overcome. I say, the new covenant, we can overcome everything.

And these are all, I'm talking about people who call themselves believers. This is what the new covenant is and this is how ministry goes. And I tell you, it depends more on the mother-in-law.

All of you know that the biggest problem in the mother-in-law, daughter-in-law relationship is always because of the mother-in-law. Not because of the daughter-in-law. The mother-in-law is imposing or how dare you treat my son like that or some type of rubbish like that.

In the old covenant, that's fine. But that's not how it is in the new covenant. So I'm very thankful that, you know, the Lord has rewarded her.

She took care of her mother-in-law and daughter-in-law and my mother stayed in Bangalore for many years and towards the end she stayed in our home. But even when she was not home and she had surgery and all, Annie went and stayed with her in the hospital to look after her. So it was a mother-daughter relationship when she was a daughter-in-law and now she's reaping the fruit of that with her own daughter-in-law.

So I thank God for all that that's gone through and finally the exciting part as a grandmother to her grandchildren. I tell you, these grandchildren love her. Whenever someone is in the hospital, Annie is the one who goes there, sits with them in the hospital and takes care of them and hugs them.

They really love her. She plays with them. Whatever children's games are there and she plays with them more than I do.

And she's strong enough to be able to pick them up and carry them. My back is not so strong to be able to pick them up, but she does that. So these are the seven areas where God has done something in her that's made her what she is.

I want to say a few words as a husband. I want to tell you, show you something which a man wrote after his wife died. See this.

It says, I never knew. I never knew. This is what a man wrote after his wife died and I read it out to you so that none of you will have to say this after your wife died.

Think of it now before she dies. I never knew how much she was to me. I never knew how patient she could be.

I never realized until she went away how much a woman helps a man each day. And oh, I never knew how thoughtless I had been at times until I saw her die. I never knew the crosses that she bore with smiling patience.

You know, you think behind the smile of your wife everything's okay. There may be a cross that makes her smile. Or the griefs that were upon her heart strings as she toiled away when she worked away in the kitchen in the house.

I only saw her smiles and thought she was happy. I took for granted joys that never existed. I might have helped her then, but I didn't know.

I was thoughtless. Most husbands are thoughtless until their wife dies. Then I thought she worried needlessly and yet I see her life was bounded by regret.

Not because of the husband, but because of many other problems that women have and mothers have. I might have done much more for her had I but known her sorrows, or at least if I thought to try. But now that I'm alone, this man says, at last I see, listen to this, how much of pain her smiling hid from me.

I never knew how much I leaned upon that little woman until I found her gone. How much her patience, gentleness and cheers had meant to me through all those early years. How many little things she used to do to smooth my path.

Alas, I never knew. I read that now and then. I want to be alert to those things and I hope all of you husbands will be alert to it before your wife dies.

Don't say those words afterwards. I also want to share with you a little pictorial display of how she was as a mother. The story of one mother.

The young mother set her foot on the pathway of life. And she asked the Lord, is this going to be a long way? She asked her Lord. And the Lord said, yes, my daughter, the way will be very hard and long and you'll be quite old before you reach the end of it.

But you will find that the end is better than the beginning. God gave her four little sons and the young mother was extremely happy. She could not believe that anything could be better than these four sons, these years.

So she played games with her boys, taught them Bible stories, prayed with them each night before tucking them into bed, cooked nourishing food for them each day and talked with them and laughed with them. And the sun shone brightly on them all and the young mother said, nothing can be better than this. Then the night came.

You know there are trials in life, even with little children. And there was a storm and the path became dark. Sicknesses and other trials.

It's a picture of journey through life as a mother. And her boys shook with fear. And the mother drew them close to her and covered them with her sari.

And her boys said, Mom, we're not afraid, for you are near so no harm can come to us. Then the morning came and there was a lake to be crossed. A steep hill of character development had to be climbed too.

They crossed the lake but the boys grew weary as they climbed the hill. The mother also was weary but she could not show it, lest the boys get discouraged. So she kept saying to her sons, a little more patience and we will reach the top soon.

So the mother helped her sons and they climbed and they finally reached the top. The boys said, this is the hill of character development. Mom, we could not have made it without you.

That night when the mother laid down, she looked up at the stars, the children were asleep and she said, this was a better day than the last one for my sons have now learned to face difficulties. We want our children to face difficulties. Yesterday the Lord gave them courage, today the Lord gave them strength of character.

The next day there were strange clouds that darkened the earth and that's another thing our children faced and faced too, of hatred from others because of the stand we took as a church in CFC. Jealousy from others because of how God was blessing our children. And the four boys stumbled in the dark and were confused.

Then the mother said, look up, lift up your eyes to the light and the boys looked up and saw the bright light of God's love and that light guided them through the darkness. And that night the mother said, this was the best day of all because my sons have now learned to love those who hate them. The days became months and the months became years and the mother grew old and weak and frail.

But her four sons had become tall and strong and had accomplished much. Above all they walked with the Lord and now when the way was rough, they carried their mother in their arms. The sons got married to four lovely girls who also loved the Lord and they had children both boys and girls.

Grandchildren now looked forward to grandma's coming. Her smile and her love became their everyday longing and they looked, mother, fathers, sons, wives, grandchildren, all sat grandma down, placed a crown on her head and said we thank God for you. Then up in the clouds they saw a bright blue road and a golden gate to heaven.

The mother knew that she would reach the end of her long journey one day. And she said, now I can see that the end is as the Lord said much better than the beginning, even though it meant so many trials. But now my sons can walk with the Lord without my help.

They will help their children also to do the same. And then she knelt down and prayed saying, Lord, thank you for helping me to finish the work you gave me to do. And her son said, mom, you're not going to go there alone.

One day we will go all through those gates together when Jesus comes. You're not going to go ahead. But we'll never forget you because your example, your prayers have made us what we are today.

We'll always remember the tasty food you cooked for us, the clothes you washed endlessly for us to wear, the cool hand on our brows when we were sick, the way you laughed with us and enjoyed seeing us laugh, the way you cried with us in our sorrows. Above all, you showed us how Jesus loves us by the way you sacrificed everything for us. You are the place we came from.

You were our first home. You were the one who taught us to walk. You were our first love.

And you were the one who taught us to love the Lord. We thank God for you. We love you.

One day this mother will meet the Lord in the air, her son will meet the Lord in the air and she will say, well done, my good and faithful servant for being a first class mother on earth. Enter into the joy of your Lord. Yeah, that is the end of that.

I just want to say one more thing. And that is, there is a song that we, that I like to sing to my wife. So if you will be patient with me.

It is called You Will Never Grow Old. Let me try. You will never grow old with God's love in your heart.

Time may silver your lovely hair. God will still be with you everywhere. So keep God's love in your heart.

That's the way. Never to grow old. I thank God for you, my darling wife, for standing with me, bearing with me, being the mother of my children that has made life so exciting for me.

God bless you.

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