

# You Can Begin Now To Live As Jesus Lived

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of being more than doing, highlighting the significance of who you are before the Lord over what you do for the Lord. It draws attention to Jesus' example of living before serving others, emphasizing that life precedes service to avoid hypocrisy. The message stresses the need to focus on character and inner transformation before outward accomplishments, both in secular and Christian contexts.*

**Scripture:** Philippians 4:13, Ephesians 6:1, Luke 2:51, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Matthew 5:44, Romans 8:28

**Topics:** "Identity in Christ", "Inner Transformation"

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## Description

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## Transcript

One of the big differences between what we preach in our church and what is mostly proclaimed in Christendom is we emphasize being more than doing. What you are is more important than what you do. What you are before the Lord is more important than what you do for the Lord.

Whereas, if you look at what most Christian churches and preachers emphasize, it's what you are doing for the Lord. People ask, what are you doing for the Lord? Well, I say, I want to be something first. And the reason we emphasize that is because of a word which, I think, I've never heard anyone speak on this, Acts 1 verse 1. But we have emphasized it constantly, Acts 1 verse 1. Jesus began to do and teach.

He did in his life first, then he taught others. So he was something. And then he did serve others.

So life was, the life came before service. If you emphasize service, or if that is primary in your mind, you will always end up as a hypocrite. Remember this.

Because you will first, and you'll become very proud. You'll be proud of what you do for the Lord. And, you know, the secular world around us is full of people who have accomplished something.

We don't find people being praised for their character in the world around. People are praised for what they accomplished. Scientists have accomplished something.

People who went to the moon accomplished something. How they lived with their wives at home, how they brought up their children, we don't even know. It's not important.

They went to the moon. They broke the world record in the 100 meters or the marathon. It's all accomplishments.

The sports world, the political world, they led the great countries, or they were presidents or leaders. Every field you look at, science, sport, anywhere, it's accomplishment. What you do, what you do, what you do.

And even in the Christian world. What have people done? People have written books and they've traveled here and they've preached to so many people and brought so many people to Christ. It's always accomplishment.

And there's no record in the Gospels about how many people Jesus brought to salvation. No record. No total kept by the Holy Spirit.

No total kept by the Holy Spirit of how many miles Jesus traveled. What Jesus did in terms of service was not primarily. Of course, he served more than anybody else.

But what he was. So when it says what Jesus began to do, it's referring to his life. And then teach was a service for others.

So that's why we emphasize that from our life comes our service. Because Jesus said, from the innermost being, the rivers of living water will flow. The first verse of Acts of the Apostles, this book was written by Luke.

The same person who wrote the Gospel of Luke. And we know that because he refers to Theophilus in the first verse and Luke also. And he says, the first account I composed, Theophilus, which is Luke's Gospel.

The sum of Luke's Gospel, the title of Luke's Gospel given by Luke himself is, here it is. All that Jesus began to do and teach. That is Luke's Gospel.

So if you understand that, then what is Acts of the Apostles? Acts of the Apostles is what Jesus continued to do and teach through his spiritual body. That is what he did and taught through his physical body. And Acts of the Apostles is what he did and taught through his spiritual body.

And in the last 2,000 years, Jesus continues to do and to teach through his body, the church. And that's what we have seen, that the church is the body of Christ. The church is not a building.

Those of you who have accepted Christ as your Lord, you are part of the body of Christ. And the Lord wants to do and teach others through you. You may not be a big teacher or preacher, but you can teach your children.

You can teach some other person younger than you. Every one of us can teach somebody else. Even a kindergarten child can teach somebody in the slums who does not know ABC or that CAT is cat.

So there's nobody who says, I'm too young or too inexperienced to teach. You all know something more about Jesus than somebody around you. Not only than somebody, than many people around you.

Every one of you sitting here, I can say, you know, you and your children, you know a lot more about Jesus than people in your school. We all know more about Jesus Christ and about God than many, many people around us. And our calling is to first of all be something before them by our life, behavior.

And then as you get opportunity to share with them what we know about Jesus Christ, how we changed our lives, our testimony first of all, even if we can't preach from the Bible. So think of this. Jesus is continuing to live and to teach others through us.

I hope he's doing that through you. First of all, in your own home, the way you live with your husband, your wife, your parents, the way you conduct yourself before your children. That's where Jesus wants to live a life through you.

And then teach your children. Teach others around you. Please be gripped by this.

I know it changed my life completely when I was gripped by this, that God's primary calling was not for me to travel here and there, but to be something. To be something in my home first, to my wife and children. And then to teach that to others.

And that's brought such a balance in my life. If you only serve and serve and serve, you'll get imbalanced. And you'll become a hypocrite after a while.

You'll get a name for doing things. You know, a lot of you serve in CFC in many ways. Yeah, great.

So many departments in CFC that keep this work going. And many of you have a part in it. And you can be proud of that.

But if you're not living a life in your home, what's the use? You're teaching, you're doing something, but you're not actually living that life at home. That's what you need to repent of. And so, when Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11, and verse 1, Follow me as I follow Christ, or be imitators of me as I also am of Christ.

I mean, first of all, to imitate Paul, boy, that's such a challenge. That person was so wholehearted. That brother was so wholehearted, Paul.

He sacrificed everything. He sacrificed marriage. He sacrificed his business.

He left his rich parents and lost his inheritance in Tarsus when he decided to follow the Lord. Of course, God gave it back to him towards the end of his life. But the man was so wholehearted and total, and he was willing to sacrifice so much.

I was thinking of this passage in 2 Corinthians 11, in relation to be followers of me as I am of Christ. In 2 Corinthians 11, Paul says, you know, he says there are many people who are boasting about what they've accomplished for the Lord. Verse 2 Corinthians 11, and verse 18, since many are boasting according to the flesh, I will also boast.

He says there are, verse 13, false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ, and there are many like that today. And if you're not careful, you'll be deceived by these deceitful workers, false apostles, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. Are you able to discern them? There are many like that in the world today.

And if you want to discern them, you better take seriously the things that we're speaking here about being before you're doing. So, we are very careful about who we allow to preach in this pulpit. If we don't know anything about his personal life, we say, well, I don't care how well he preaches, I want to know something about his personal life before I allow somebody to preach in a pulpit of CFC.

I mean, if he's a great preacher, it doesn't impress me. Sorry. There are millions of churches that will accept you, but not here.

We want people who do in their life, in their home. I want to know how you live with your wife. I want to know how you bring up your children.

Then we'll allow you in the pulpit, even if you're not a great preacher. Just share a brief word, that's fine. But that life is more important for us.

So, if you recognize that, you'll be able to easily distinguish a false apostle or a deceitful worker. And he says, even Satan, verse 14, disguises an angel of light, so you better be careful. All these people who say they saw angels, you know who they are saying? They are saying demons.

That's what they see, and they are fooled by the devil, because they are not emphasizing life in their own personal life. And so, he says, these people disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. So, he says, they are boasting about many things.

Why they travel, what work they have done for the Lord. And he says, I'll also boast. And look at his boasting.

Verse 21. He says, compared to them, I'm weak by comparison. Okay, are they Hebrews? I'm also Hebrew.

Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? Verse 23. I am more a servant of Christ than them. And I'll tell you how.

I'm not going to tell you how many countries I traveled to, how many books of the Bible I wrote, or how many people I preached to, or how many people I converted. No, those are all for other preachers. I'm going to tell you, I have been far more times in prison, verse 23, than the others.

I have been beaten so many times for preaching the gospel, that I've stopped counting. I've often been in danger of death in preaching the gospel and traveling. Five times the Jews gave me 39 lashes on my back.

Three times I was beaten with rods for preaching the gospel. This is what he's boasting about. Once I was stoned for preaching the gospel.

Three times in my travels to preach the gospel I was shipwrecked. We read about one of them in Acts 28. But apparently he was shipwrecked three times.

Now why in the world didn't God protect the ship in which Paul was traveling? See, God doesn't make life comfortable for his greatest servants. Comfort is for those who are living for the world. Paul was one of the most wholehearted people of his time.

And traveling to preach the gospel, at least we thought his ship would be protected, and his ship was wrecked. Not once, but three times. It says here in the next part of that verse, verse 25, 24 hours I spent swimming in the water, trying to save my life, maybe hanging on to a piece of wood or something.

He was in the deep. I say, Lord, what is this? Is this man serving you or not? Yes, he's serving me. And I will show you how much he was willing to suffer to preach the gospel.

And how much he would trust me, even when his ship is wrecked, and even when he's 24 hours in the open sea. What a testimony! And then he says, I have been in frequent journeys. He hardly got any rest.

And he would travel in rivers that would overflow, and verse 26, he was in danger from robbers that would try and loot him. And because he was traveling through dangerous roads, infested with robbers, he was in danger from his Jewish people who hated his preaching Christ. And he was in danger from the Gentiles, who felt he was preaching another God, compared to the idols we worship.

So he was in danger from both Jews and Gentiles. He was in danger when he was in the city, he was in danger when he was in the wilderness, different types of dangers. He was in danger when he was in the sea.

And then he was a danger among people who pretended to be believers, false brethren. We've experienced false brethren in CFC. Yes.

Who came here hoping to become somebody important, or an elder, or somebody great, and then got offended with the truth. False brothers. Their whole motive from the beginning was wrong, to gain something for themselves.

The total opposite of the spirit of Christ. These are the false brothers. I hope none has left here.

You know, sometimes we are fooled by them, like I've often said, these checkpoints, where I'm fooled by somebody, I lift the checkpoint and say, OK, come in. But God's got another checkpoint further up. And he says, this fellow is a crook, send him back.

And he comes past my checkpoint and out of the church. So I thank God there's another checkpoint further up, manned by God, who cannot be deceived. And we've seen that again and again happen in CFC Bangalore, we've seen it happen in different CFC churches in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, different places.

False brethren. And there's a danger we face there. And for some reason, God does not expose them immediately, and Paul says he calls it a danger that the church can face through false brethren, and Paul faced it.

This is what he's boasting about. I mean, he could have boasted, well, I discerned these false brethren as soon as they came in. Oh, that would have been great, right? No, he says, no, I didn't.

I got fooled. Paul lifted up the checkpoint and let them go, but God sent them back. He's doing that even today.

And then he says, I've been in labor and hardship. I've spent many sleepless nights preaching the gospel. I've been hungry and thirsty and traveling.

Sometimes there's not enough food to eat or the food you get is not hygienic. No clean water to drink. And sometimes without food.

And in cold seasons and in exposure to the weather. And apart from all these external things, he says, finally, I'll tell you the biggest burden of all. The pressure on me when I'm concerned about what's happening in this church and what's happening in that church and what's happening in the other church.

He says, all the others are not bothered. They're just sitting in one church. He says, I've got responsibility for so many churches, and I'm always concerned what's happening here and what's happening there.

And it's daily. Imagine a man who's got daily pressure, not just concern, a pressure on his heart because of concern for all the churches. He says, that's what I boast about.

And if somebody is weak in some church, I feel weak also. And if somebody falls into sin, verse 29, in some church, I'm concerned. Now listen to this man saying to us, what did we read? Follow me.

Can you follow him? I read this and I say, Lord, where in the world can I follow you? Follow Paul. And he's following Christ. It can so discourage us.

But here's the encouragement. He's not saying be like me or have my ministry. No.

That would discourage us. Or suffer like I did. I've never suffered like that.

But what does it mean? It's like a man who is walking or running a huge race, not a marathon race of 26 miles, but thousands of miles. I mean, from being born again to becoming like Christ completely. It's a huge race of thousands of miles.

It's the greatest marathon of all. And because it's on sand, you can see the footsteps. Or if it's on snow, you can see the footsteps.

So even if Paul is 1,000 miles ahead of me, I see his footsteps here. That's the best part of it. Okay, I'm not anywhere near him.

He's miles and miles ahead of me. But I see his little footsteps here. And I can walk in them.

Even though I may be 1,000 miles behind him. And Paul may be 100,000 miles behind Christ. But he sees Christ's footsteps and he walks.

So it's not that we're so close to Paul, or Paul was so close to Christ. No. But can you see his footsteps? Which means the way Paul lived.

Or the way Christ lived. I mean, even if we don't suffer as much as him, or accomplish as much as him, it's easy to see his footsteps and walk as he walked. Please, my brothers and sisters, accept this challenge today that I want to follow in Paul's footsteps as he followed Christ.

And I'll tell you something to encourage you. 1 Corinthians 11, verse 1 is the verse we read. Follow me, be imitators of me as I follow Christ.

Now, let me tell you the word that will encourage you. To whom was this letter written? That's the thing that encouraged me. I'll tell you the type of people the Corinthians were.

Turn to 1 Corinthians 3, and verse 1. 1 Corinthians 3. This is the type of people to whom Paul is saying, follow me. I could not speak to you as to spiritual men. Is there somebody here who feels you're not spiritual? Okay, this is for you.

But to men who are carnal, of flesh. Do you feel you're a bit carnal? Okay, this is for you. As to babies in Christ.

Do you feel you're a spiritual baby? Brother, sister, this message is for you. Follow Paul. As he followed Christ.

I gave you milk to drink. That means you don't understand the deeper things of God's word that you hear in CFC. You don't understand it all, and you can't explain it all.

You only know, Jesus died for me. And thank for my sins are forgiven. That's milk, that's all you know.

Great. Follow Paul. It's for you, this message.

You are not able to receive it. Then he goes on to say in verse 3, there's jealousy and strife among you. Are you defeated by jealousy and strife? This message is for you.

Follow me, Paul says, as I follow Christ. So who is excluded? This letter was not written to some highly spiritual people. Down at your level, the word of God comes.

He says to them in verse 3, last part, you're not walking like Jesus Christ, you're walking like other human beings. Does that word apply to you? That your values are the same as other human beings in the world? This message is for you, my brother, sister. Follow Paul, as he followed Christ.

What a challenge that is, that people who are down in the kindergarten, who are coming last in the kindergarten examination. Let's look at that. The child is in the kindergarten, that's low enough.

But he's also coming last in the kindergarten examination. He can't spell CAT correctly. Paul says, follow me.

So there's nobody excluded. And if he had written this letter to the Ephesians, we'd say, oh, that's for some spiritually minded church. They can understand.

No, he wrote that to the Corinthians. Follow me as I follow Christ. I want you to take that challenge and think not of your ministry.

You know, Paul did not say, be an apostle like me, write scripture like me. Nobody's writing scripture today, then who can follow Paul? He's not at all talking about ministry. As he follows Christ, do you think Paul could follow Christ in his ministry? No.

Number one thing Christ did was die for the sins of the world. Could Paul die for the sins of the world? No. Paul never walked on water.

Paul never multiplied five loaves into 5,000. Paul never raised a man who was dead for three days and buried in the grave for four days. No.

He's talking about life. Always when it says, follow me, he's talking about life. Not about ministry.

Nobody can follow Jesus' ministry. Nobody can turn water into wine. People who talk about that are just telling you lies.

Don't listen to their stories. There's so many stories people say nowadays of people who have gone to hell for three days and come back, gone to heaven for three days and come back. It's dumb people who believe all that rubbish.

There are books written on it and people make money out of it. Paul went to heaven. You read in 2 Corinthians 12.

Let me show you that. Because if you go to Google and search for people who have gone to heaven and come back, you'll see so many. Deception.

Outright deception going on in the world and there are dumb Christians believing it. But see a man who really went to heaven, 2 Corinthians 12. He refers to himself.

He doesn't even say it is him. But he talks about a man in Christ who 14 years ago, 2 Corinthians 12 verse 2, 14 years ago, he's referring to himself, and he says, I don't know whether it is in the body or out of the body, I was caught up to the third heaven. The third heaven is the immediate presence of God.

The first heaven is the sun, moon and stars and the planets and all the galaxies in space, millions and billions and billions of miles of space as we know it and as we don't know it. That's the first heaven. Beyond that is the second heaven where the devil dwells and his demons.

We are told in Ephesians 6 that we battle with the spiritual forces in the heavenlies. That is in the second heaven. He was in the third heaven.

They were all in the third heaven. But when they sinned, they got cast out of heaven. Not to hell, but to the second heaven.

We read in Revelation 12, one day they will be cast down to the earth. The entire demonic group and Satan will be cast down to the earth sometime before Christ comes. We read in Revelation 12.

Then in Revelation 20, from there they will be cast into the lake of fire. Right now they are in the second heaven. Immediately above that is the third heaven where Christ is, where the Father is and all the saints of God are who have died, Old and New Testament saints, where Abraham is and all the great saints of the ages and where we go if we die.

He was taken up to the third heaven and he says, that's called paradise also in verse 4. That's where the thief went when he died. At that time paradise was in the heart of the earth. Now after Christ's ascension it's in heaven.

And he says, I heard, listen to this. This is the most important verse you must remember. I heard inexpressible words which a man is not permitted to speak.

Paul, what did you hear there? I'm not permitted to tell you. That is the man I believe really went to heaven. And all these guys you read on Google search who say they went to heaven and they tell you all details, they write books about it and make money.

Don't believe that nonsense. If they really went to the real heaven, they would not be allowed to say what they heard. But the devil is a master deceiver.

We read in 2 Corinthians 11, 14 that Satan disguises an angel of light. He can in your imagination take you into some place and say, this is heaven. And people believe that.

And they hear so many demons speaking there who dress up like angels. It says here that Satan disguises an angel of light, verse 14. And he says, I saw angels and I heard that.

And they come back and write books about what the devil and the angels fool them about. And the worst part is there are thousands of people who buy those books and believe all these lies. You know why? Because they don't believe the Bible, the word of God.

They don't read it. Or if they read it, they don't read it carefully. So we can't follow Paul in all those things.

We can't follow Jesus in his ministry. But in the life. That is why I say, if you want to begin your Christian life, begin where Jesus began.

Where did Jesus begin? His life. Forget about his ministry. Completely forget about his ministry.

Don't think about preaching or raising the dead. Not even preaching in a church. No.

Don't think about all that. Think about following Jesus in his life. Where did it begin? Let me tell you in very simple words.

That which is most difficult for children and adults. Submitting to God-appointed authority. That's where Jesus began his life.

Obedying imperfect Joseph and imperfect Mary as a little child. Can you submit to imperfect authority in the church? First of all, Jesus respected them. It's one thing to submit.

Jesus respected and submitted. Because God appointed him there. Were there faults in Joseph and Mary? You think Joseph and Mary were perfect? Any Roman Catholics here? Who believe Joseph and Mary were perfect? Saint Joseph and Saint Mary? No, no, no, no.

Sinner Joseph and sinner Mary. That's what I call them. They themselves said, Mary said, God my Savior.

She called God her Savior. She needed to be saved from sin. And Jesus, the perfect one, submitted to imperfect Joseph and Mary.

That is where his life began. And I'll tell you something I've seen through the years. I've seen it in my own life.

God prepared me for my ministry by making me submit to imperfect authority. And to authority that was jealous of me almost from the beginning of my Christian life. I was born again in 1959.

I was water baptized in 1961. By 1963, I had experienced an initial baptism in the Holy Spirit. Though it was completed only in 1975.

I don't know why it was in two stages. I don't explain that. But there are many things of the moving of the Spirit we can't explain.

But as soon as I was baptized in the Holy Spirit and I got a gift of prophecy to preach the word of God at the age of 23 when I was 1963, I had such an anointing that God was giving me words to speak to people that were really challenging them. I even wrote a little book in 1963 on the book of Revelation. A Bible studies that I took through the whole book of Revelation in 1963-64 when I was still in the Navy.

I hadn't understood victory over sin. It was ministry. But there were a lot of other elders in the church I attended who were jealous that people were more taken up with me and they would never let me speak in the church.

I would speak in little homes and all. Not in the church. And then I would preach out in the streets.

So I had to submit to imperfect authority right from that time. And then later on when I came out into full-time Christian work, I found again a lot of people jealous of my ministry and schemed and manipulated to push me out from where the church I was in. And I had to sit quiet at the back of one church for about three years.

End of 69 to 72. Quietly. Because people were jealous.

They just pushed me out. And the Lord said, keep quiet and submit to these elders. Don't judge them.

I did not respect them as spiritual men. Not at all. I could not say that they were following Jesus.

I couldn't see the life of Christ in them. They would lose that temper. They were the leaders and pastors.

And God said, shut your mouth and submit to them. Because you're in this church. I mean, if you leave the church and go to another church, then submit to the elders in that church.

I learned lessons of submission in those days, which I never knew was a great lesson to learn. But those are the years God really broke me. Don't think you're a great man just because you got a gift of speaking.

You've got to learn to humble yourself and submit to authority that's imperfect. And I really, now when I look back, I thank God of those years, all those years, from the time I was converted, almost until 1975 when CFC was started in our home. Many, many different experiences of breaking, humbling, defeat, and hitting rock bottom, and God filling me with the Spirit again.

So, that's where I learned that the important thing in the Christian life, to follow Paul as he followed Christ, to follow Jesus, is to begin where he began. Don't jump into 10th standard. Start in the kindergarten.

Many people come to CFC and they try to jump to college. Ah, I can talk about this, this, this, this, this, this, which you hear in CFC. Hang on.

A time will come when you can speak about all that, but be where you are right now and have a sober, serious estimate of your own spiritual level, and don't try to go beyond that. And I'll tell you something from my experience. God will never, never back you up if you don't submit to authority God places over you.

He will never say about you, as he said about Jesus, at the age of 30, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Because he submitted to authority. Imperfect.

A wife has to very often submit to imperfect authority, a husband at home. And she has to trust God, that God will overrule and prevent her from ever being tested beyond her ability. This is what many wives

would say.

You ask me to submit to this unreasonable husband. I say, you must also believe that 1 Corinthians 10, 13, that God will never allow you to be tested beyond your ability, if you are a wholehearted disciple. If you are not a wholehearted disciple, then of course that promise is not for you.

Then I don't know where you'll be. You may be tested beyond your ability. All things will not work for your good.

But if you are a wholehearted disciple of Jesus Christ, you have no ambition in life, except to please God and complete the work he has for you, I can guarantee two things for you. 1 Romans 8, 28, every single thing that ever happens in your life, which you call good or bad, will work for your good. Work for your very best.

And the other thing I can guarantee is 1 Corinthians 10, 13, that God will never, never, never, never allow you to be tested beyond your ability. That's like he will not give you an examination paper above your class. Impossible.

Your teachers in school didn't do that. The Lord Jesus will not do it. I'll tell you from my life, I've experienced many tests through the years, but never anything beyond my ability.

Never anything that would make me tense and anxious and worried and what's going to happen, unless I was full of unbelief. So, please remember this. Now you see, I know, I'll tell you something, through the years, in 45 years, I've very rarely spoken about submission to authority.

Very rarely. And I'll tell you why. Because all the elders of CFC churches in India are not spiritual men.

I'll tell you that honestly. Then you say, why do you appoint them? I say because, have you heard this expression, a one-eyed man is king among the blind people. Right? He can't see clearly, but he's got one eye.

All the others are blind. So he's the leader. That's why we appoint imperfect people as elders in many CFC churches.

We hope that they'll develop into two-eyed people by the time the others get one eye. Sometimes the others get one eye before this guy gets two eyes, and then the others have to replace this man as elder. That also happens.

So, I say, because CFC elders are not all perfect, I always have a fear that some carnal elder will take this message of mine and proclaim it to other elders. I say, listen to what Brother Zach says. Submit to the elders.

Meaning, submit to me. That's what I'm scared of. I've never in my life asked people to submit to me.

I never will. I tell people, you do not sin if you disobey Zach Poonen. You sin if you disobey God.

You don't have to listen to me. Many people, when they come for advice to me, I tell them, listen, this is my advice, but you don't have to listen to me. Go before God, and I want you to be connected to Christ, and if you feel you should not do what I say, you don't have to listen to me.

Let me give you support for that from Scripture. I like to support everything from Scripture. So you can have a verse for not obeying me.

Keep that verse in mind. Whenever you want to disobey me, please take this verse. It will help you.

1 Corinthians 16 Paul was the senior most apostle, almost, in the sphere in which he worked. And he had a wonderful Bible teacher in his team, not in his team, but among those who worked with him, called Apollos. And we read in 1 Corinthians 16 verse 12 that Paul urged Apollos to go to Corinth to visit the believers there.

But it was not his desire to come. So when Paul says, Hey Apollos, I think you should go. It says he urged him, come on, go, meet these, encourage these brothers in Corinth.

And Paul, no, I don't feel free, sorry, even though you're telling me I don't feel free to go. Paul says, okay. He didn't say, listen, I'm the authority, you listen to me.

No, okay. Don't go, Paul. If you don't feel free, don't go.

And he says, when he feels free, he'll come. When he has opportunity, he'll come. What a mature man Paul was.

That's a really godly elder. I told Apollos to come, but he didn't listen to me. Great.

He's serving Christ, and when he feels free, he'll come. That's the type of elders we need in CFC. Of those who will give complete, who will give their advice to others, but then give them perfect freedom to do exactly as they feel the Lord has led them.

That's why I'm scared to speak about authority. But it's still true that the Bible teaches submission to authority. Children, obey your parents.

For this is right in the Lord. It says in Ephesians 6 that it may go well with you and that you may live long on the earth. So I ask parents, you know that verse Ephesians 6 and verse 2 and 3. It's an Old Testament commandment quoted in the New Testament.

Honor your parents, obey them. Verse 1 to 3. Why? So that it can go well with you. I ask all of you parents.

Do you want it to go well with your children? Don't just educate them. Don't just give them an inheritance of a few lakhs of rupees. Few millions of rupees.

You know, because this goes on the internet and the other parts of the world. When they hear lakh, they think it's a lack of money. It's not lack.

In India, lakh does not mean lack of money. It means plenty of money. They don't understand that word.

So, millions of rupees, that's not what we need to give to our children primarily. If you want it to go well with your children, yeah, by all means, leave them an inheritance and give them good food, education, but if you really want it to go well with them, teach them to honor you as parents and to obey you and respect older people. I used to tell my children, you must respect your Sunday school teachers when they were studying in Sunday school here.

If you don't respect your Sunday school teachers and I hear a complaint from them, I'm going to take their side against you. I told my children that. I won't listen to all your arguments.

Teach them to respect, because we are living in a world where many young people do not know how to respect older people. You know, in India, even the non-Christians know how to respect older people. When I travel somewhere, even unknown people who are much younger than me will call me uncle.

They don't know who I am. Uncle, please take the seat in a bus or anywhere. But, I find today, in Western countries particularly, they don't have that attitude or respect for older people.

And it's seen in the way they speak to people. They don't call you I mean, most people won't even call you uncle. You can have a young 20-year-old calling me hey, Zach.

Okay, I'm not insulted by that. I refuse to be insulted by anything. It's impossible for a man to make me feel insulted.

Because I died long ago with Christ. But I feel sorry for them. I say, how are their parents brought them up? They don't even know how to speak respectfully to somebody? That's really strange.

But that's the world we're living in. It was not like that 100 years ago. Even in America or anywhere.

It's become like that in these last 40-50 years. It's a sign of the end of time. You cannot follow Jesus if you don't learn to speak respectfully to older people.

I'll tell you that. I don't care how much you know scripture or how much you know about following Jesus. If you don't know how to speak respectfully to someone older than you, especially someone who is older than you in the Lord, you are a million miles away from following Jesus.

Let me tell you that. Jesus learned submission to authority. That's why we speak so much about his first 30 years at home.

Follow me as I follow Christ. Let's follow Christ in the way he lived at home. And that's why I believe Paul also submitted to authority.

Once when he spoke rudely to the judge, the high priest, and he realized who it was, he apologized immediately. That's respect. We may make mistakes, but we must apologize immediately and set it right.

When we do make a mistake, if your children speak rudely to you, they must apologize and they must ask forgiveness. We must teach them that at a very young age. If you really want your children to grow up following Jesus, many children of believers, even in CFC churches, are not following Christ.

And I'll tell you why. Because their parents did not take this seriously to teach them to honor their parents and honor older people and respect them. And that's not only at home.

I believe that Jesus would have respected older people. He went to the synagogues and I'm sure he respected the older people there. He didn't agree with them.

He could see all the hypocrisy and all the Pharisees, but he didn't go around rebuking them when he was 15, 20, 25 years old because God hadn't called him to do it. Can you imagine Jesus sitting at the age of 25 in a synagogue and seeing the absolute hypocrisy of everything going on there, what they called worship,

and the boring messages he sat. You know, any of you who have to endure some boring message and sometimes many CFC people write to me, brother, please tell our elder, he's so boring.

At least if he'd speak 15 minutes, it'd be great. But he speaks for one hour. When he thinks he's finished, he goes on for another 15 minutes.

And I say, well, I don't know what to say. I keep telling these elders, don't speak more than 20 minutes, but none of them listen to me. So I leave it.

I don't force them. But I say, when you are tempted like that, think of Jesus at the age of 25 listening to these boring Pharisees going on and on and on and on in the synagogue. And he just endured it, endured it, endured it.

He knew a million times more than them. And he kept quiet. Can you do that? One day the father will say about you, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

Because he listened to boring sermons and kept quiet because it was not yet his time to do anything or say anything. There are many, many things we learn by submission. I've been in many meetings like that.

As a young man, and I heard these boring sermons and the Lord said, keep your mouth shut and listen. I remember once in the early days when even in CFC, you know we used to throw the meeting open in the early days of CFC for everybody to speak. And then of course some people who never got a chance to speak in any church would get up and start sharing something.

And I remember when one of these people, not even really a I don't even know whether he was a believer, but he got up and started sharing something. And I said, Lord, what shall I do? I don't want to ask him to sit down. Because he had just started.

I mean if he had gone beyond five minutes I would have asked him, brother, please. I don't tell people to sit down. I don't insult them like that.

I say, brother, we'd like to hear some of the others as well now. So I think let's give them a turn or something, you know, in a gracious way. Anyway, I was listening to this man and from the beginning it was just boring.

And I said, Lord, please give me something. So he turned to some words. He turned to something like, let's turn to 1 Peter 2 or something like that.

So I turned to 1 Peter 2. And believe it or not, the Lord showed me an amazing revelation from the opposite page, which this man was not even referring to. So I said, this is amazing. I would not have seen that in the other page if this man had not turned to the other chapter.

I said, how wonderful God is. So God can do... I learned something that day. If you are really seeing God, even in a boring meeting, God can speak to you not through what that guy is saying, but from the opposite page of what that guy is quoting in the Bible.

Amazing. God is so powerful. And this is how I've learned so many things through the years.

I sat in many boring meetings. Dear brothers and sisters, instead of sitting complaining, why not say, Lord, here, I've got no authority in this church. I've got to listen to this boring sermon of this guy.

I don't know how long he's going to go on. But I'll turn to the chapter he told me to turn to. Maybe you'll show me something else from the opposite page.

And I'll get something out of this meeting. So I won't go away from this meeting empty. And some other brothers who are not as wholehearted as you would say, oh brother, wasn't that a boring meeting? We got nothing out of it.

And you say, hey, you got nothing out of it? I got something. Not from what he said, but I got something from the other page. You know, there's absolutely nothing God cannot do.

Why do you say that you don't get anything? So I've learned something about submission to authority because I learned it from Jesus. How he must have submitted to boring Pharisees for years in the synagogue. How he submitted to Joseph and Mary at home and everything.

When he was tired and exhausted, Mary told him to go and do something. Can you fix this for me? He would fix it. He was so good at obeying Mary in everything.

Some impossible problems in the house, Jesus would fix it. That is why Jesus went and asked Jesus, I mean Mary went to Jesus in Cana and said, hey the wine is finished. And it's pretty late at night.

Can you do something? How did Mary ever think that Jesus could she wasn't thinking of a miracle because he had never done a miracle till that day. But she had seen through 30 years, this son of mine can fix anything. Somehow or the other not a miracle, somehow or the other he'll find some way to solve that problem, fix that door or get that water when the well is a bit dry, he'll find some other place or something.

He'd always do something. She had so much confidence in him that she knew he would do something about this. He'd find some shop where they're still selling wine in the middle of the night and he'd fix it.

That's what she thought. That even that little sentence of hers shows me how Jesus lived at home. That the mother could go to him and say they have no wine.

Little things like this in the gospels, if you ask God for revelation, you'll see how Jesus lived. Ask God to open your eyes when you read these things. I mean, these things became clear to me only after I got gripped with a passion to live as Jesus lived in his first 30 years.

I said leave alone the ministry part Lord, let me begin where he began in the kindergarten. Let me learn how he lived in 30 years without preaching a sermon, without doing a miracle. From that came my ministry.

I had to do first and then live. I believe all of you, my dear brothers and sisters, all of you, even if you're carnal like the Corinthians and fleshly and you're struggling with jealousy and strife and all that, I want to say to you in Jesus' name that the Lord can say about you this is my beloved son, my beloved daughter in whom I'm well pleased. I want you to believe that today.

Don't have such a low estimate about yourself where you say, well I'm pretty hopeless. I messed up my life so much. Do you know there are people who messed up their life more than you at the judgment seat of Christ who will have a great reward because they believed that God can solve any mess.

And he couldn't do that for you because you didn't believe it. And then God shows you the video of that guy's life and you discover how his life was worse than yours. You say, boy, he did something with his life.

And the Lord will say to you, because he trusted me. His life was worse than yours but he trusted me. Your life was better but you didn't trust me.

You kept condemning yourself saying, I'm hopeless, I'm hopeless, I made so many mistakes, I blundered, I'm still slipping up. And you kept saying that instead of saying you know like we have on the screen at the back I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. With Christ I can do everything.

Do you believe that? You first must say without Christ I can do nothing. That's the first part of what you see on the other side of the screen. Then you come to the part where with Christ I can do everything and when you do everything with Christ then come to the middle.

Be merciful to others who are not able to do all that you can do. We have three very important verses on the screen. You start there on without Christ I can do nothing then you go to with Christ I can do everything and when you do that, be merciful to all the others who you feel are not as spiritual as you are.

You really live a wonderful Christian life. You just need those three verses. So, follow me as I follow Christ is a challenge that we should take up seriously.

Looking at Paul's example. And how is it possible for Jesus? There was an underlying quality that Jesus had which enabled him to submit to this type of authority in his home and anywhere. And for example let me ask you a few questions.

I mean a question like do you think Jesus had to learn ABC or whatever the Hebrew language was and addition and subtraction or did he know everything when he came to the earth? No, he had to learn. He had to submit to his teachers in school. He had to learn many things.

Do you think he knew carpentry from day one? He had to learn from Joseph how to plane a piece of wood or how to saw a piece of wood and how to hammer a nail. I used to think, did Jesus ever hammer his thumb accidentally? What do you think? People say, oh no he would never. He did everything perfectly.

No, I believe he hammered his thumb sometimes and it became red. You know why? Because he was human. Hammering your thumb is not a sin.

You're human. Do you think Jesus ever tripped up somewhere on a stone when he was a little boy? Or he never tripped and fell in his whole life? Then he was not tempted like us. I believe he did trip and fall.

Some of you may have seen that Passion for Christ movie and I remember seeing that about the crucifixion of Jesus. There's one scene I remember very vividly where, you know the question of whether Jesus does everything perfectly or whether he stumbles and falls. The Bible says when he was carrying the cross he stumbled and fell.

So does Jesus stumble and fall? Yeah. It was not a superhuman man carrying that cross. It was an exhausted human being beaten, hammered, stumbled and fell on that road and he couldn't carry it anymore.

He's flat on the ground. And that scene when it comes in that picture where Jesus is stumbling and falling there's a looking back they show another scene of when Jesus was a little child and in this where Jesus

stumbles and falls his mother is standing there as Jesus stumbles and falls the cross and runs to help him and then there's a flashback to an earlier time when he was a little boy in Nazareth and he stumbles and falls and his mother goes and helps him. So vivid and true.

He was like us he stumbled and fell, he hammered his thumb when he was a carpenter. But he didn't curse or swear. And I say, Lord, I see so many things in your life.

He didn't stumble and fall into sin but he went through the ordinary trials of physical life that we have. I don't know, he may have helped his mother in cooking in the kitchen and learned things there and made mistakes in cooking. That's not a sin.

So I see so many things when I meditate on the life of Jesus how he must have, his mother was widowed and Joseph had died and as the eldest son, how he must have helped her even in the kitchen as a young man to help. I don't know how many young men would help their mothers if they are widowed in the kitchen. Or even if the mother is not widowed.

Some men think it's below their dignity to go to the kitchen and do anything there. Not Jesus. He never felt there was anything below his dignity.

We have this strange idea in India that is beneath the dignity of a man to go into the kitchen and help his mother or his wife. Jesus never had any such feeling. And the day you get rid of that feeling, you'll be a little more like Jesus.

If you think something is beneath my dignity as a man. Oh, that's a woman's job. Which is a woman's job? Changing diapers? Or in the days, in the early days when our children were small we had no diapers.

We just washed our children's bottom with our hands. And fathers do it. I've done it.

There's nothing beneath the dignity of a human being. If you really want to follow Jesus, you'd be willing to help your wife in anything. This is what I mean by following Jesus.

It's not preaching great sermons. All that will come later in your life, brother. But begin with the small things.

Begin with the small things. That's how Jesus began. And not for one or two days.

For 30 years. We are all in such a hurry to have a great ministry. When will my period of training be over, Lord? When can I start off this great ministry? Hang on.

Just follow him and he will show you step by step. I never knew in the days when I was being trained by being told to keep quiet when elders were jealous of me that I had not any plan for my life at all. I was so discouraged.

But I obeyed the Lord and I submitted. I want to encourage you to believe. I can say, follow me as I follow Paul, as I follow Christ.

I mean, Paul is thousands of miles ahead of me. Christ was thousands of miles ahead of him. But I can see Jesus' footsteps.

Small footsteps. I remember even when I was taken to court by some religious people and the very first day, I'll tell you honestly, I was scared because I'd never been in a court in all my life for 59 years and I knew the justice system in India could be pretty corrupt. And the Lord said to me, don't be afraid.

I was taken to court by religious people before you. Look for my footsteps of faith and love. Faith in your Heavenly Father who controls circumstances even in a court and love for your accusers.

Love them and bless them. And I said, Lord, I'll do that. And I did that from day one.

I trusted my Heavenly Father and I love my accusers and I still do. It's a wonderful life, I'll tell you. And a life in which the Lord tells you to do something, He'll give you the grace to do it.

That's the best part of it. I've often said this story how once one of my sons, I think he was 8 or 9 years old, I said, can you go and get a loaf of bread from the shop? And he ran. And in a few moments he ran back and said, Dad, give me the money.

So what did he expect? Was he expecting me to go and work as a laborer somewhere and earn that 15-20 rupees and then go and buy the bread and come back? No. I expected him to ask me for the money. So when the Lord tells you to do something, don't run.

Don't run. Say, Lord, give me the power. I can't do this.

I can't buy this. I don't have the resources. Say, Lord, give me the power.

He'll give it to you. Do you think I would refuse to give him the money after I tell him to go and buy the loaf of bread? Do you think the Lord will refuse to help you if you ask him to do something? I remember when I was seeking to be filled with the Holy Spirit and I was praying with someone. I wasn't having faith.

And this one word he told me brought faith into my heart. He said, Zach, do you think God will call you to serve him and then refuse to give you his power? That was it. Do you think God will call you to serve him and refuse to give you his power? Immediately I got faith.

That was a word of faith he spoke to me. 45 years ago. It changed my life.

And I say the same to you. Do you think God will ask you to do something? Anything in his word. Don't lust with your eyes.

Don't get angry. Do all things without murmuring and complaining. Love everyone.

Love your enemies. Do you think he'll ask you to do that and refuse to give you the power to do it? Impossible. Let's believe him today.

Every discouraged person here, let your spirit be lifted today saying, I believe Lord that though I may be the worst person sitting here today, you will give me the power. Even if I'm lower than those Corinthian Christians, you will give me the power to make a new beginning today. To walk in your footsteps.

Even though I may be 10,000 miles behind you, I'm going to start following you today. God bless you. Let's pray.

Let's come to the Lord with faith this morning. Not condemnation. There is no condemnation in Christ.

I don't care how much you've messed up your life. There is no condemnation in Christ. Just come to him and say, Lord, I believe I can walk as you walked.

Will you say that in your heart to the Lord? Silently, Lord Jesus, I believe that I can walk as you walked in these early footsteps. And I'll get closer and closer as the years go by. I believe it Lord.

Help me. Give me the power of your Holy Spirit. I'm one of the unknown people sitting here.

I'm one of the defeated ones sitting here. I'm not a prominent member of CFC. I'm one of the completely unknown little persons sitting here.

Nobody knows even my name. Lord, please help me. Will you pray that? Lord, I believe you can do this even for me.

Even for me. That's faith. Jesus will not break a broken reed.

Even a dying flame, he will not blow it out. He'll blow it into a flame. Remember that.

There's no place for discouragement or condemnation in a Christian. Heavenly Father, I pray that nobody will go out from this room today discouraged. That everyone will believe that you can do a miracle for them.

And that you can turn their life around no matter how much they have messed up and failed in their entire life. And even if they've made many new beginnings, if this is their thousandth new beginning, help them to believe you'll still help them. Thank you Father.

In Jesus name, Amen.

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Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/X4K3ObBCzdE.mp4>

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