

You Have a Very Important Task in Christ's Body

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding God as a loving Father who encourages us, rather than a hard taskmaster. It highlights the need to use the gifts God has given us, even if they seem small, and to avoid comparing ourselves to others. The message stresses the significance of daily encouragement as a simple yet powerful way to fulfill our ministry and reflect the character of God.

Duration: 51:53

Scripture: Hebrews 3:13, 1 Corinthians 12:7, Matthew 25:21, Matthew 25:23, Isaiah 41:10, Psalms 115:8, Psalms 139:14, Matthew 6:26, Ephesians 4:29, Colossians 3:23

Topics: "God as a Loving Father", "Encouragement in Ministry"

Description

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Transcript

Heavenly Father, we pray that you will help us to be sensitive to your Holy Spirit, who I believe is in our midst, though we are in different places, time and space mean nothing to you. We pray that you will give us a word according to our need, according to the need of everyone who is here, even the little children, be glorified in our midst, and say, we pray that you will sense your presence, Lord Jesus, speaking to us. Thank you, Father, for hearing us, in Jesus' name, Amen.

I'd like to turn to Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 25. If you have a Bible, it's very important that you open it and look at it. The way we can become familiar with Scripture is by opening the Bible every time in the church service and following the verses that are coded.

This is how I became familiar with Scripture. If you're too lazy, I've seen a lot of believers in many churches, they never open the Bible. If you only look at the verse on the screen, you won't become familiar with the Scriptures.

But if you open your Bible, you'll become familiar with many verses. And if it's the same Bible you're using all the time, very often your mind records where a particular verse is on a particular page. I found very often that's how I go to a reference.

So, please open your Bible to Matthew 25, and verse 14, and you read here of a parable that Jesus spoke in relation to his second coming. Matthew 24 is all about his second coming. And then, in relation to that, he spoke of some parables, three parables, essentially.

One is the first one, Matthew 25, 1 to 13, where he spoke about five wise virgins who were ready for the coming of the Lord. And you read here, the five were foolish, they were all virgins, which means their lives were good, but they were not like Babylon and Jerusalem. It's not that five were Babylonian cross harlots, and five were virgins, no.

All ten were virgins, and yet five were not ready for the coming of the Lord, just because their lamps died out. And it's possible for a person to start out well, the lamps were burning in the beginning, and then it dies out, because we are not constantly, you know how it is with a lamp, it's not like electric bulbs, a lamp needs oil all the time. And so, if you don't keep on replenishing the oil, the lamp dies out.

That's a parable, that's the meaning of that parable, that they did not keep replenishing the oil, and the oil throughout the Bible is a picture of the Holy Spirit. So if you neglect, how do we, how does the oil run out of our life? If we neglect the promptings of the Holy Spirit, if we keep on neglecting the promptings of the Holy Spirit, over a period of time, He will stop speaking to you. That's like the lamp running out.

So I'd like to show you a verse before I come back to Matthew 25, and that is in Hebrews and chapter 5, where Paul, or I think Paul, whoever wrote this book, was concerned that that these Christians were not able to hear the Holy Spirit speaking to them. And it says here in Hebrews 5, that concerning Jesus, verse 11, concerning Jesus, verse 11, there's so much we want to tell you, but it's very hard to explain. Not because you guys are not clever, you're very clever, and I think all of you who are listening to me are very clever, but clever people may not be able to hear about Jesus because it says here in Hebrews 5, 11, they have become dull of hearing.

They could not hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, and that's a very important thing that we need to think about as to how in the world do you become dull of hearing? And that's connected to what I said earlier about the oil missing in the lamp. By the time the bridegroom came, there was no oil. So I want to connect that with this verse, that to have the vessel full of oil is to be sensitive to always be able to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit.

And these folks had become dull of hearing, they couldn't hear, and I believe that is what happened to the foolish virgins, that they were not ready for the Lord's coming. And how does that happen? You know, Jesus said in very well-known verses, the very first word that Jesus spoke in his ministry was, man shall not live by bread alone. That's what he said to the devil, and the devil tempted him with the first temptation in Matthew 4. Those are the first words of Jesus' spoken ministry, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

Now that's not referring to the Bible, that is the word of God. But in Matthew 4, it's referring to every word that is proceeding, present continuous tense. Present continuous tense means not past tense.

The Bible is the word of God, past tense, the Lord has already spoken it. But every word that proceeds from the mouth of God is present continuous tense, that means God is continuing to speak. And I used to think of that as reading the Bible every morning, until I discovered that for 1,400 years after the Day of Pentecost, nobody had a Bible.

The Bible was printed for the first time really in the end of the 1,400s. So what could that verse mean for 1,400 years, for Christians? How does God speak? Through your conscience. So I want you to think of Matthew 4, 4, man shall live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God as the voice of your conscience.

And every one of us can hear it, even if you don't have a Bible in your language, like so many people in India don't have a Bible in their language. But if they are born again, their conscience will still speak to them. Every word that proceeds from the mouth of God is the conscience.

And if you are sensitive, you hear God speaking to you many times a day through your conscience, prompting you, don't do that or do this or prompting you to speak an encouraging word to somebody or prompting you to do something to help someone or prompting you not to go there or not to do that or not to look at that picture. He's always speaking, trying to protect us from sin. So if you refuse to listen to that voice, the voice will become fainter and fainter and fainter.

The more you refuse to listen to your conscience, it becomes fainter and fainter and fainter and fainter. Finally, you come to that stage mentioned in Hebrews 5, 11, dull of hearing. That's a terrible state to come into.

Imagine if you became physically deaf, how limited you'd be. Just think of it. Supposing you become deaf.

You can't hear anything. You can't hear anybody. You don't hear any sounds.

You can't communicate with people because you can't hear what they're saying or what they're replying. It's a terrible thing to be. And none of us would want to be deaf physically.

I want to encourage you, my brothers and sisters, value your spiritual hearing just as much. You ask yourself whether you value your spiritual hearing, the voice of God in your conscience as much as you value your physical hearing. If you do, I guarantee you will never become deaf.

In other words, when the Holy Spirit prompts you, listen to that prompting. And if he tells you not to do something which a lot of other Christians are doing, you don't do it. Never mind if all the other Christians in your church or around you are doing it.

And you don't have to judge them. That's another voice the Holy Spirit would say in your conscience. Don't judge others.

Judge not. But you listen to what the Holy Spirit is telling you. It's none of your business to see whether that person is doing something which God's forbidden you to do.

So if you keep listening to this voice, you will never, never come to that condition mentioned in Hebrews 5.11. And then there'll be oil in your lamp. And then you'll be ready for the coming of the Lord. It's so simple.

It's like two plus two is four. So now you all understood how to be ready for the coming of the Lord. How to have that oil in your vessel all the time.

And the wonderful thing is we can become more and more sensitive. Unlike human hearing, where I don't know much about how human hearing is, whether our sensitivity becomes more or no. I think a child's hearing is just as good as throughout his life.

It's good hearing. But it can become more sensitive. I've heard that dogs can hear sounds that we can never hear.

God has made the ear of a dog so sensitive that it can hear very high frequencies that if somebody plays that high frequency note, we hear nothing, but the dog hears it clearly. So that challenges me that God can make me very sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit that I hear things that other Christians don't hear. Even though God is speaking.

God is speaking all the time. And in Revelation and chapter one, we read the opposite of what we read in Hebrews 5. In Hebrews 5, what we read was people who had become deaf and could not hear what the Holy Spirit was saying. But in Revelation, we read the opposite of Hebrews 5.11. In chapter one, John the Apostle is in the Isle of Patmos, and it says here in verse 10, Revelation 1.10, I was in the Spirit.

See that expression, in the Spirit. It's a very good expression. I want to be in the Spirit all the time.

That means sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit. And I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. And what is the result? I heard the voice of the Lord like the sound of a trumpet.

Boy, John was 95 years old, and he had kept his conscience so sensitive throughout those years, from the time when he was maybe 27 years old, when the Lord called him to be a disciple. From that time, for nearly 70 years, he had kept his conscience so sensitive that by now, the voice of the Lord was not just a faint whisper, like in the early days, it was as loud as a trumpet. And dear brothers and sisters, that's how loudly we can hear the Spirit of God speaking to us, directing us, guiding us, stopping us from going in a certain way, or urging us to go this way, you know, like that well-known verse in Isaiah.

If you're not familiar, some of you may be familiar with that verse in Isaiah. And your ears will hear a word behind you saying, this is the way, walk in it. When you turn to the right or to the left, the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to us.

Turn with me to Isaiah, please. Isaiah 30, verse 21. Your ears will hear a word behind you saying, this is the way, walk in it.

When you turn to the right or to the left. What a wonderful way to live. Two things.

One, I will see the Lord, who is my teacher. Verse 20, the last part. Your teacher will no longer hide himself.

Your eyes will behold your teacher. And I see Jesus as my example in front of my spiritual eyes. And the Holy Spirit prompts me in my spiritual years saying, take this journey, go this way, go that way.

That is how Jesus lived throughout his life, listening to the Father. And it's one of the marks of being filled with the Holy Spirit continuously. You can know you're filled with the Holy Spirit continuously if you hear the voice of the Lord like a trumpet.

And you see Jesus with your inner eyes clearly, the way he lived and et cetera. So we turn back to Matthew 25 now. So the first thing Jesus said about being readiness, being ready for his coming, is to be like those wise virgins.

All of them, their external life was pure. That's why they're called virgins. These are not people fooling around with sin.

Their external life was good and upright. They paid their taxes. They were upright.

They didn't go around losing their temper and shouting and yelling. If they hurt somebody, they ask forgiveness. They were all virgins.

But on top of that, they kept their conscience, the wise virgins kept their conscience sensitive to immediately obeying. The number of the spirit said something. So the vessel was full of oil.

So now you've understood, all of you, how you can keep your vessel full of oil ready for the coming of the Lord. Very simple. Even children can understand.

When your conscience prompts you, if you told a lie to your mom or dad, your conscience says, go and confess it. Go and tell your mom and dad, I'm sorry I told you a lie. Or the adults also.

If you hurt somebody and the spirit of God prompts you to go and ask forgiveness, do it immediately. In fact, Jesus once said that when you come with your offering to God and there you remember your brother, you hurt your brother. How do you remember that? That's the voice of God speaking in your heart.

Hey, before you pray to me, don't you remember what you said or hurt that person or the way you spoke to your wife a little while ago? Go and settle that and then come with your offering. So if you keep listening to that, our vessel will be full of oil all the time. And we'll hear the sound of the Lord like a trumpet.

And then we'll be ready. That's the first thing that the Lord spoke in relation to being ready for his coming in Matthew 25 in verses 1 to 13. And he said, be on the alert, verse 13.

Be on the alert. Because you don't know when your Lord is coming. So be sensitive to the voice of the spirit all the time.

But then he went on to speak about our service for the Lord. And God has called every one of us to be his servants. I'm not talking about full-time Christian work like God called me to.

Every one of us is a servant, whether full-time Christian work or working in a secular job. That's like saying, I'm a member of Christ's body. Every member of my human body is a servant of the brain or what the Bible calls the head.

And the Bible refers to Christ as the head. It's what we would call the brain that controls every part of the body, the eyes and the ears and everything. And we can say that every part of the body has got a ministry.

Only a paralyzed thought is not cooperating with the head. But God has created the body in such a way that even the little male has got a ministry that nobody else can fulfill. You know that when you feel itchy or something like that.

It's only a nail that can help you. Every single part of the body has got a ministry. So that's what I mean by serving the Lord.

All of us are called to serve the Lord. So the first part of that Matthew 25 was related to our walk with the Lord. And then here's another parable about serving the Lord.

And there all don't have an equally important ministry. You see, even in our body, some parts have a very important ministry, like the eyes, the ears, the kidneys, the liver, some internal parts. I've got a very important ministry.

And the hands have got an important ministry, but not as important as the eyes. If I lose one or two fingers, I can still survive. But if I lose my eyesight, it'll be pathetic.

So some parts of the body have got a more important ministry than other parts. But every part has got a ministry. Even the hair on our body and the hair on our heads got a ministry, but it's not as important as some other parts.

So remember this, that every one of you, if you are born again, if you are the child of God and Christ is your head, you have a ministry. Now, you may be lazy and not sought to find out what that ministry is. That's because you're too lazy or you don't do anything.

It's like you may be a child of God, but you could be like a paralyzed hand. You know, a hand that just collapses and can't do anything because it's not... What do you mean by a paralyzed hand? It's connection to the brain is broken somewhere. Something has happened and the connection to the brain is gone and that hand has become useless.

Then the other hand has to do twice the work. So there are many people in the body of Christ like that, their connection to the head, to Christ is gone because they tolerate some sin in their life or they keep doing something which pollutes them. For example, some believers watch pornography and that's the best way to break your connection with the head.

You can go to any number of churches and listen to messages and sing songs and all that and you watch pornography, you break your connection with Christ. And you can't hear what the Lord is saying. You've got to ask God to deliver you from it completely, 100% or a simple thing like not apologizing when you hurt somebody and you don't apologize.

Your connection to the head is gone. So if we keep on living, if we do that only once or twice, you may still hear the voice of the Lord, but if you keep on doing it, ignoring the voice of the Holy Spirit saying, go and settle that matter, go and settle that matter. What will happen? You'll finally come to Hebrews 5.11, God love hearing, you can't hear.

So here I want to show you in the matter of service for the Lord. Please read carefully. He called his slaves to him and all of us are his slaves.

And listen to this, all are not given an equally important ministry. To one, he gave five talents, verse 15, Matthew 25, 15. To another, he gave only two.

And to another, he gave only one. You read that, five, two, and one, showing that when it comes to ministry, you're all given different degrees of ability. Some people have got a very wide ministry, five

talents, so many gifts.

And some others have got only two. Some others have got only one. But everybody's got at least one.

Some may have two, some may have five. It's not because we are more spiritual. It's just God in his sovereignty has determined that this man must be an apostle, this man must be a prophet, or this man must be a helper.

This man must be a teacher, and this man must be an evangelist. Different, different gifts. Or this man, as I said, can be just a little help in the body of Christ.

That's also mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12, the gift of helps. So there are many gifts like that. So here it speaks in a parable of some who had five, some who had two, and some who had only one.

And then we read here that the person who got five talents, see what he did. Immediately, as soon as he recognized, God give me something, he went and traded with them and gained five more talents. That means he used whatever gift he had and got more.

He multiplied, that means he got some results from using his gift. And if you recognize that every one of you has a gift, he wants us to use whatever he's got. Don't compare yourself with somebody else.

The person who got two, he also went and traded and gained, verse 17, he got two more. But the person who got one talent, maybe he was discouraged because he looked at that person who had two and the other person who had five, and maybe he was jealous. Oh, why, why that guy's got more than me? Why that guy's got five times the talents I have or maybe he had a little complaint against his master, against God.

Why have you given me so little compared to that brother? Why can't you give me the type of gift that brother has and get so much prominence and respected and accepted? And here I am, little unknown person in the church. And what did he do? It says he didn't even, he could have used it and he could have easily gained one more talent if he had used it. But instead of that, I believe it was because of discouragement, verse 17, oh, sorry, verse 18.

He dug a hole in the ground and hid the talent. That means he just threw it in the ground, as it were. Wasted it.

I don't have time to do anything with it because upset that God didn't give him five or God didn't give him even two. Now it's possible for a believer to be like that, to always compare himself with somebody else who's got more and say, if I had that person's gift, I could have done so much for the Lord. If I had five, I could have done so much.

I want to ask all of you a question. Are you like that? Do you compare yourself with somebody else in the church who's far more gifted than you and say, I could have done so much if I had that person's gift. When you're the person with one talent and the danger is you'll bury it and you won't be ready for the Lord's coming.

You'll be exactly like those five foolish virgins. They're not just speaking about life. They're not just speaking about ministry.

There, their life was wrong. Here, the person wasted his gift and everybody has a gift. And the end result was he was rejected like those five foolish virgins.

I want you just to look at a verse before we proceed. In 1 Corinthians and chapter 12. 1 Corinthians chapter 12 speaks of many, many gifts.

And here's what I told you about helps also being a gift. For example, look at 1 Corinthians 12 and verse seven, the important word that is everyone. To everyone, the Holy Spirit has given some gift, some manifestation, which is good for the whole, which is for the good of the whole body of Christ.

That's like saying every part of my body has got some function to fulfill for the sake of this body. Even a simple thing like eating food. How do we eat food? Our legs take us to a table and our eyes look at the food.

Our noses smell it. Our hands go out. I'm just talking about a simple thing like eating food.

Our hands go and take something from the bowl and into our plate. And then we put it into our mouth. The mouth opens and then the teeth begin to chew the food.

And then the throat is to swallow it. And then it goes down all the way to the stomach. And there are a whole lot of things done in the stomach.

Before that food is strength, is converted to blood and flesh and skin and everything else that this body needs and bones and everything else. It all comes from the food we eat. But it's converted into what is necessary for this body.

But it's not just one item. It's not just the mouth eating. So many things.

So in the same way, every member has got some gift for the good of the whole body. So if you are born again, you're a member of the body of Christ and you must remember that verse. To each one, are you included there? Yes, you are.

Some manifestation of the spirit has been given to you you may have been too lazy to find out what it is. Or maybe you know it, but you're not used it. But it's given to you not for your own glory, for the common good, for the good of the whole body.

And then there are some spectacular gifts. It says in verse 28, apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healings. See those type of gifts everybody would like to have.

Oh, I'd like to be an apostle or a prophet or a teacher or do miracles or healings. But then after healings comes another gift called helps. Did you read that? Helps, one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Many, many believers have the gift of helps. They may not be exercising it because it does not bring any fame or glory or honor. Sometimes people don't even know that you're fulfilling that gift.

See, for example, there are people who will quietly go and help somebody. It's a gift of helps. Go and clean the restroom in the church building and nobody's watching.

Nobody knew, nobody knew you did it. You don't get any honor or credit for helps or quietly help in some way. You know, mopping the floor and cleaning out the place after the service is over or something like

that.

But nobody's watching. Doing a certain ministry that nobody's watching helps. Quietly going and helping some brother or sister or some family that's in need.

Quietly doing it helps. There are many, many, many believers who have that gift but they don't exercise it because they don't get any honor for it. Oh, they'd be delighted if they could be a prophet or an apostle out there in public and got a tremendous amount of honor and respect.

So that shows that such people are not interested in the body. They're only interested in themselves. I want some honor.

I want some respect. So if you give me a gift like that, I'll exercise it. But if you give me some ordinary gift like helps which hundreds of people have and I'm just one of the hundreds and I don't want to be one of the hundreds.

I want to be one special one. Those are the ones who waste their gift, bury their gift. That's the one you read off later on.

The one who received one talent. Maybe his gift was helps. He said, boy, he compared himself with the apostle there and the prophet and the one who's got a gift of healing and the one who's got a gift of teaching.

And he said, what's this? Not even noticed. I never in my life stand in the pulpit. It's all quietly helping people behind the scenes.

And very often the people who I help don't even recognize it and don't even thank me for it. And so they bury that. That's and you don't do anything with it means you bury that in the ground.

You don't do anything with it. And then one day the Lord comes after a long time. Matthew 25 again, verse 19.

After a long time, the master of those slaves came to settle accounts. Do you know that one day Jesus will come to settle accounts means to get a report. What did you do with the money I gave you? What did you do with the gift I gave you? You can't complain that day, Lord.

You gave me only one. Remember there's nobody with zero. And so that in that verse in 1 Corinthians 12 to everyone, to everyone, some manifestation of the spirit is given.

So there's not a single person listening to me or who will listen to me in the future. Who's born again. You can say, I don't have a gift.

If you're not born again, if you're not received Christ as your savior and Lord and you're not connected to Christ. Then I agree. You don't have anything.

But if you have received Christ as your savior and Lord to everyone, the Holy Spirit gives some gift. Just like saying every part of the body has got some function. So in that day, the Lord comes and he's going to settle accounts.

Means he's going to ask you, what did you do with the gift I gave you? And that day you will discover how this little gift of help that God had given you, which you didn't value. One talent would have been so useful. You know, a hundred people with one talent can do more than one person with five talents.

That's simple arithmetic. Six people with one talent can do more than one person with five talents. So you don't need many people, but you don't need so many spectacular gifts.

And then we read here. This is the thing I want you to notice now. When the person who had earned five with the five he had come, he said, master, verse 20, you gave me five.

I gained another five. In other words, I made full use of you made me an apostle or prophet and I made full use of it. And I've landed so many churches.

I prophesied to so many people. I did all this and blessed so many hundreds of thousands of people. Okay.

And the Lord says, well done. Verse 21, you were faithful in a few things. And I'll put you in charge of many things now.

I'm going to give you a reward. There's going to be a reward in heaven for faithfulness and enter into the joy of your master. Then verse 22, the man who had two talents, he did not produce five like the other person.

He produced only two, but it's not a question of how much it's a question of percentage. Five out of five is a hundred percent and two out of two is also a hundred percent. So in God's eyes, he did just as well.

His gift was not apostle or prophet. Maybe his gift was a little minor gift, not so spectacular, or his sphere of ministry was not a big country. His sphere of ministry was not even a town, maybe in his house, some gift.

And it says he brought the two. And the thing I want you to notice here is this. Compare what the master said to the man who produced five talents in verse 21 with what the master said to the man who got two talents in verse 23.

Have you ever done it? Have you ever compared verse 21 and 23? One is what the Lord said to the person who produced five talents. And the other is what the Lord said to the person who produced two talents. Exactly the same words, word for word.

You were well done, good and faithful servant. You were faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things.

Enter into the joy of your master. Do you notice that? Verse 21 and 23 are exactly the same word for word. Even though this guy only got two, the other guy got five.

That teaches us that in the final day, that mighty apostle who traveled so much and did so many things, and this other guy who never left his hometown but ministering only there, but was faithful in the church, sharing the word and witnessing to different people. Maybe he was an evangelist and witnessed to people. They both get exactly the same gift, even though the other guy traveled the world and this guy was only in the same town all along.

Exactly the same commendation, exactly the same reward, because it's a matter of percentage. It's a matter of what did you do with what the Lord gave you. And the Lord does not compare one with the other.

You recognize God has given more to some and less to others. So that's a very encouraging word to those of us who some of you are always wishing that we had a more spectacular ministry, but some women who wish they were men. Oh boy, I'm so limited because I'm a sister.

I can't reach out like other brothers can. I'm limited. There are wives limited to being at home all the time with the children.

Boy, if it were a man like my husband, I could go here and fellowship with the brothers and travel here and there and the other places. Well, maybe your husband got five and tons, you got two, but you can get exactly the same reward. Now we come to the person who had one talent.

Let's say he was the person who was what 1 Corinthians 12 refers to as helps. He had a gift of helping people, but he didn't exercise it. The one who had one talent said, Master, what's 24? I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, gathering where you scattered no seeds.

So I went and hid your talent in the ground. He could have easily produced one more talent. That's all that God expected from him.

God didn't expect him to produce two talents or five talents, only one. But he hid it in the ground. He didn't use it.

And he had a grudge against his master. You're a hard man. That means you didn't give me as much as you give that man.

You're prejudiced and you've got favorites in the church. I'm not one of your favorites. You're very hard towards me.

But that guy is your favorite because you've given him so many gifts. My dear brother, sister, please examine your heart if you've got any type of attitude like that. One way you find out that is by jealousy.

If you find yourself jealous of some brother or sister, who's more gifted than you, or more popular than you, or who's more accepted than you in the church, and a little jealousy comes in your heart, you're the guy with the one talent. And you think your master is a hard man. He's given you so little and expects so much.

And he's given that person so much. And that person becomes so popular and accepted. And here I am stuck, or here I'm a woman, always at home with so many children.

And look at it, if I were like a man, I could travel here and there. You know, all these raw questions about why has God made me like this? There are many believers who have complaints against God. Why have you made me so short? Or why have you made me so tall? Or why have you made me so ugly? I'll tell you this, God has made you exactly the way He wants you to be in order to fulfill a particular ministry.

And so the reason why He did not use His gift is because He had a wrong understanding of His heavenly Father. He did not know God as His loving heavenly Father. What does He say? You, verse 24, middle, you're a hard man.

That is the concept that some believers have about God. You're a very strict person. Always quick to catch me if I did something wrong.

If you feel like that, it's very easy, particularly in a church like CFC Churches where we preach such a high standard of overcoming anger and overcoming sexual lust and loving our enemies and apologizing quickly and paying our taxes properly and being upright and all these things. You can inwardly say, boy, this is very hard. I'd rather go to some other church where they never preach on all this.

They just listen to the music and sing songs and watch all the strobe lights there and have a good time. And the service is also over in 45 minutes. We can come home.

You know, but this church, it's so, everything seems to be so hard. The services are two hours, two and a half hours. It's, God is a very hard man.

You have that type of attitude. You will never, never fulfill what God wants you to do in your life. A wrong understanding of God is a loving father.

So I see from this, you are a hard man, that expression in verse 24. You reap where you did not sow and you gather where you never scattered any seed. You didn't give me any gift.

Of course he gave him, but he thinks he had nothing. What do you give me? Nothing. You didn't give me anything.

You did not sow anything. It's not true. You did give him one gift.

But, and so he says, I was afraid, I was 25 and I went away, hid your talent. There's a wrong type of fear of God that many Christians have. I'm afraid God will judge me.

He punished me. We're not supposed to live like that. Imagine if you had a little child, he's always afraid to come to you because he's afraid you'll punish him.

Imagine if you had a four, five year old child like that. Always afraid to come to mommy or daddy because I'm afraid he'll punish him or shout at him or do something like that. There can be an attitude like that towards God.

Oh, he's so demanding. I can't do this and I can't do that. And I must always be careful with my speech and I must not lust with my eyes and I must apologize everything I do.

Every time I do something wrong, is that a burden? It's like if you tell your child, when a thorn gets into your foot, pull it out immediately. It's all God says. You did something wrong, pull out the thorn immediately.

If you keep it, it'll get infected and you can lose your foot after a while. Now we understand that physically. But some people think, what a demanding God this is.

I immediately I must go and ask forgiveness from my wife or forgiveness from that person. He's pulling out the nail that got into your foot. Pull it out immediately.

Don't delay. So there are many thoughts like this that we can have that make us feel that God is a very hard task master and not a loving father. My dear brothers and sisters, you ask yourself, what is your idea of

God? Do you see him as a loving father? As one who says, even if a mother forsakes her nursing child, I will not forget about you.

Is that your concept of God? I found in my early Christian life, I had this idea of God as a very hard, demanding person. And my life was miserable. I was defeated all the time.

But it's gone now. I see my father in heaven as my daddy. Jesus came to make me a precious, valuable, important child of my heavenly father.

It's not just me. It's about you also. You must remember that you're a very valuable, important member of God's family.

Even if you have no gift, my brother, sister, even if you don't have any spectacular gift, I believe you have at least one. Every one of us has got some little gift. For example, let me give you an example of one talent.

Run with me to Hebrews and chapter 10. Sorry, Hebrews chapter 3. Here's something we are told to do every single day. And it won't be a burden.

Is it difficult for you to breathe every day? Is that a burden? Oh, I have to breathe every day. Is it difficult for you to eat food every day? Is it difficult for you to go to bed every day? There's so many things you do every single day. None of those are the burden.

Eating food, breathing, going to sleep. But here's something else. The Lord says add this on to what you do every day.

Hebrews chapter 3 and verse 13. Encourage one another every day. There's a big list of things you do every day like brushing your teeth, sleeping, eating, breathing, encouraging.

Why not add that to the list? It says here every day. Encourage one another every day. Now, you don't have to be an apostle or a prophet to encourage someone.

You know you can encourage someone by just smiling at them. Husbands, smile at your wives. Wives, smile at your husbands.

That's all that you need to encourage. Or when something is done, some ordinary task was done and you appreciate it. Thank you very much.

That was very good. And especially when you tell a child that. That's all you need to encourage somebody.

It doesn't require some postgraduate degree or something to learn how to encourage people. You can encourage a person when you're speaking to somebody on a telephone. After you've discussed or spoken about whatever you finished your conversation, sometimes add a little sentence.

You know, something that you really mean. Don't say something you don't mean. Well, I hope it'll go well with you today or something.

Have a good day. That's become an expression. Have a good day, but mean it.

And God bless you today. Something. There's so many.

It doesn't take many words to encourage someone. But if you take this seriously, say, Lord, I never want to say anything. What's the opposite of encouraging somebody is discouraging somebody.

So at least if you don't encourage, at least let me say, I don't want to discourage anyone. Let me not say things that make other people discouraged. Why in the world didn't you do that? Imagine talking to your husband or wife like that.

Maybe they forgot to do something. So what? The world is not going to collapse. Or you speak to a child like that.

That's discouraging. Let's learn. We've all got this bad habit.

Now let's learn to encourage one another. You don't need to be an apostle or a prophet or to have a healing gift to fulfill that ministry. One talent.

And you can use it every day. And God can accomplish something to you. All I say is don't bury it.

We become like the God we worship. You know, like that verse in the Psalms, it says, those who make idols become like them. That's a great verse.

And if the God you worship is not the real God, but you know, you can even make Jesus Christ into an idol in the wrong way. He's a hard, demanding person. That's not the real Jesus.

That's an idol. That's a false idol. Christ is not like that.

Your heavenly father is not like that. But if you make your heavenly father into a hard taskmaster, you have made him into an idol. And then you will become like him.

You'll be hard and demanding on others. So we become like the God we worship. If the God you worship is a hard taskmaster, or you think he is, you'll become like that to others.

But if your God is a God who's always seen to encourage you, and come on, you can do it better. That is great what you did. You feel that God speaks to you like that.

I think he does. You'll speak like that to others. So we need to get a proper understanding of our heavenly father as a loving father. The trouble with this man with the one talent was he had a wrong idea of his master.

It's so demanding. He says, you can't lust with your eyes. You mustn't get angry.

It means you're demanding. What are the laws of scripture? They are laws to keep us healthy. Don't we tell our children, don't eat that mud, wash your hands.

Are these laws which are very demanding? No, it's to keep them healthy. If they always eat with dirty hands, they're going to get sick. So God's laws are not to make life difficult for us.

It's to keep us healthy. Just like we tell our children, look at everything in the Bible like that. God is not a hard task.

He's a loving father who wants to encourage us. He says, I even number the hairs on your head. So dear brothers and sisters, let's take this seriously because what will happen is if we see our God as one who

encourages us, then we will automatically become like that God.

We become like the God we worship. Oh, my God is a father. God is encouraging me.

I'll become like him. We become like the God we worship. May God help us all.

Let's bow our heads. Just for a brief moment, allow the Holy Spirit to remind you of something you heard in this message. Maybe not 25 things, but one thing for yourself.

Begin with that. Lord, there's one thing I heard today which really went home to my heart. And I want to meditate on that.

I want to chew on that and chew on that and digest it. And I want it to produce fruit in my life. Help us, Father, we pray.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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