

PRINCIPLES OF SERVING GOD

Zac Poonen

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CHAPTER ONE

PRINCIPLES OF SERVING GOD

*(A message given to evangelical Christian leaders at the
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I'd like to turn to the Word of God in Revelation Chapter 4.

After the Lord had given John a revelation of Himself in Chapter 1, He gave John an insight into the actual state of many of the churches in that part of the world - in Chapters 2 and 3. As you know, many of those churches were in a very backslidden state. Then the Lord said to John in Chapter 4:1: "**Come up here!**". What a lovely word that is!

When we see the state of things around us, and encounter problems for which we do not have a solution, it is good to hear the Lord saying to us, "Come up higher! Come and see things from My standpoint - and not from the low earthly level from which you have been looking at these things". I believe this is a word that we need to hear constantly - "**Come up higher!**".

Paul said, "One thing I do - forgetting what lies behind, and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of **the upward call** of God in Christ Jesus". He had heard the call to come up higher and he was never satisfied, no matter how high he had reached.

The danger in Christian leadership is that we stand so much in front of people. We are acclaimed. We even have media coverage now. We have titles before our names and degrees after our names!! What more do we need! I'll tell you what we need : "**We need to get closer to the heart of God! We need to go up higher!**"

God did not create Adam because He needed a servant. He did not create Adam because He wanted a scholar. And He did not create you and me because He needs servants or scholars. He already has enough servants in the millions of angels. He created Adam first of all that Adam might have fellowship with Him. That's why, for Adam, the law was NOT: "Six days you shall work and the seventh day you shall rest". No. That came through the Law of Moses later.

Adam was created on the sixth day. And so his very FIRST day - the seventh day for God but the first for Adam - was a day of rest and fellowship with his Creator. It was from that day of fellowship with God that Adam was to go out into the garden and serve God for the next six days.

And when we forget that order - when we forget that fellowship with God must always take precedence over our going out into His vineyard to serve Him - then we've missed the primary purpose of our creation and of our redemption.

We can be so taken up with the need around us - and especially in a country like India - that we have no time for fellowship with God. We may feel that's a waste of time, when there is so much need around us. But what is the result of need-based work? Perhaps plenty of work - but the quality will be poor. Statistics are deceptive. You've probably heard the statement that there are three types of lies - black lies, white lies and statistics!! Statistics are deceptive. The Jehovah's Witnesses have statistics, the Mormons have statistics. And these are among the fastest growing groups in the world today. Islamic

fundamentalists have their statistics too. Everybody has statistics these days. But Jesus never bothered about statistics.

There are times in my life when I have been through certain crises. One was very early in my life when I sought to serve the Lord and I found that although I knew the Word, I lacked power! And so I sought God for the baptism in the Holy Spirit - to be endued with power from on high. Now, I know there are different views on this - and I am not trying to convert anybody. I am just saying that I was born again and baptized in water, but "rivers of living water" were not flowing out of my life. Yet I knew that Jesus had promised that everyone who believed in Him would have rivers of living water flowing out of their life - they'd never be dry. But I found myself dry, many times. Even though I knew the Word, and even though I was preaching, I was dry. Very often my service for the Lord was like pumping a hand-pump. You know what that means - you pump and pump and a few trickles of water come out. It is certainly not like a river. Yet I saw the word of Jesus clearly: "Everyone who believes in Me, out of his innermost being will flow rivers of living water".

All I can say is that I sought God and He met with me. And that changed the direction of my life. I didn't join the Pentecostal church. I do not consider myself to be a Pentecostal or a charismatic. But God met with me and filled me with His Holy Spirit.

And then years later, I came to another crisis in my life. That was a crisis that dealt with the issue of reality - whether what I was preaching was actually true in my inner life, and whether the burden that I appeared to have when I spoke to people was something I really carried in my heart as well.

It was nearly 28 years ago that we had the first All-India Congress on Evangelism at Deolali. I presented a paper there. I was young then - just 30 years old. And you know how it is when we are young. I wanted to impress everyone. And my paper was impressive, because I had worked hard on it. My ministry continued with traveling to speak at deeper life conferences in Australia and Singapore etc., And everywhere, my aim was to impress people.

Then the Lord spoke to me once and asked me, "Do you want to **impress** people or do you want to **help** them?" I said, "Lord, I want to help them". Then the Lord said, "Stop trying to impress them then". I came to a place then in my life, where I had to say, "Lord, my inner life does not correspond with what I am preaching". Externally, I had a good testimony. But my thought-life and my attitudes - my attitude to money - were not Christ-like. I was proclaiming Christ with my mouth but the Spirit of Christ was not ruling my thoughts. And I was honest about it with God.

I believe that the first step to God is to be honest.

By then I was fairly well-known. I was writing books that had a wide circulation. I had a weekly radio programme. I was invited here and there. One day the Lord spoke to my heart and said, "Are you willing to stand up in front of that congregation that respects you

and tell them that you're not genuine, that you're not real". I said, "Yes, Lord! I don't care what people think of me. I want you to do something for me. I ask you only for one thing: That my inner life will correspond with what I preach".

That's what I asked the Lord for 23 years ago. God met with me again. He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. And the Lord said to me, "Come up higher".

Fellowship with God has now become the most precious thing for me - during the last 22 years. It has changed my life and taken away discouragement and depression from my life altogether.

I have found the secret of walking with God. And that's made my service joyful! It is no longer dry!

All your service depends on your personal walk with God. You remember when Jesus was in the house of Mary and Martha. He said to Martha, "You are worried and bothered about so many things". What was Martha worried about? There was a need there. And she was serving the Lord, unselfishly and sacrificially, sweating away in the kitchen - not cooking food for herself but for the Lord and His disciples. What greater service could she do than that? It was totally unselfish! And she didn't do it for money or for a salary, as many Christian workers serve today. No. It was totally unselfish! And yet the Lord told her, "You are bothered about so many things". She had thought that Mary was selfish, sitting there at the Lord's feet and not doing any work, but just listening. And Jesus said, "That's the important thing. That's the ONE THING needful".

There is a beautiful paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 4:2 in The Living Bible that reads like this: "The most important thing about a servant is that he does just what his master tells him to." That has brought so much rest to my heart. What am I to do when I see a needy world? Get all worked up with the need? There are plenty of manipulators in Christendom who are ready to work me up. But I say to the Lord, "I want to hear You". There are plenty of Marthas who will criticise me, saying, "Tell him not to waste his time listening, when there's a needy world perishing in sin."

We must certainly look at the world's need. Jesus said, "Lift up your eyes and look at the harvest". We must see the need and we must point out the need to others too. Yes. But the call must come from God - not from man. I have discovered that.

Jesus sat in heaven for 4000 years while the world lay dying in need of a Saviour. Nobody could pressurise Him to leave heaven before the Father's time. But "in the fullness of time", He came. And when He came to earth, He sat making stools and benches for 30 years - while the world lay dying! He would not be moved by the need alone. But when the right time came, the Father said, "Go". And He went. And He did more in three-and-a-half years than others could do in 3000 years. The most important thing about a servant is NOT running around doing this, that and the other for God, but listening to Him. It's difficult to listen.

I used to be in an assembly in my younger days where we studied the Scriptures, and fasted and prayed regularly. Every morning we were taught to have a "Quiet Time" - a good habit that I would recommend to everyone. But in spite of all the hours apparently spent in the presence of God, people were still sour, bitter, hard-to-get-along-with, judgmental, critical and suspicious..... Something was wrong somewhere. I have known times when I have spent just 10 or 15 minutes with a godly man, and I have been challenged and inspired. Can you imagine then what spending 10 or 15 minutes with God Himself can do? How is it then that all of us were not being changed? The Lord showed me that I was not spending time **with Him** in my Quiet Time. I was spending time with myself. I was just studying a book - whether the book in front of me was the Bible or a chemistry book didn't make a difference. I wasn't spending time with God - listening to Him. I was just studying a book!

Jesus said concerning Mary, "One thing is needful....to listen". From that flows everything else. And that's a very efficient way of serving God because He can tell you what He wants you to do!

The Father told Jesus what to do. Once Jesus was prompted by the Spirit to walk 50 miles from Galilee to Syrophenicia, outside the borders of Israel. I don't know how many hours it took Him to get there - probably a whole day. There He met a Gentile woman, whose daughter was demon-possessed. He cast out that demon and pointed out to His disciples the great faith that woman had when she asked for just the crumbs that fell from the children's table. Then He walked back to Galilee. That was how Jesus lived. He went all that way for just ONE soul. That wasn't impressive - statistically!! But it was in the will of God.

Jesus served like that for three-and-a-half years. And at the end of that period He said, "Father, I have finished the work which You gave Me to do" (John 17:4). Had he met all the need there was in the world - in India, in Africa? No. He hadn't. But He had finished the work the Father gave Him to do. And He did not desire to live on earth for a single day longer. The apostle Paul too could say at the end of his life, "I have finished my course".

You have a different calling and I have a different calling in Christ's Body. But we must all understand what God wants us to do. One of the main reasons for our becoming deaf to the voice of God is the **unreality** there is in our lives - the dishonesty and the pretense.

The Pharisees could not hear what Jesus was saying because they were living a life of pretense. They gave others the impression that they were godly. They stood up there in front of the people as the leaders and scholars of their time. If you had met Peter or John, four or five years before they had met Jesus, and asked them, "Peter, John, could you tell me the name of some godly man whom you know?", they would have mentioned the name of some Pharisee who was an elder in the local synagogue. Because that was their understanding - that people who studied the Scriptures, fasted, prayed, carried little boxes of Scripture-verses on their foreheads and looked so holy and pious, were truly godly

people. Then you can imagine the shock they got when they heard Jesus lambasting those elders in the synagogue as a bunch of hypocrites who were candidates for hell.

When Jesus selected His disciples, he did not select even one from any Bible-school. There was a Bible-school being run by Gamaliel in those days in Jerusalem. But Jesus didn't go there to select His disciples. He picked them up from the lakeside in Galilee - uneducated men - and made them His apostles. And they wrote books, which Bible-seminaries now give to people to study, for a doctorate in theology!! Isn't that amazing?? I think Peter himself would not have been capable of getting a degree from any of our seminaries. Perhaps only one of the disciples would have been able to get such a degree - Judas, the cleverest and smartest of the lot.

Why did Jesus pick such people? They were simple-hearted and willing to listen to Him. What a stir there was when these simple men went to any synagogue and preached. They did not preach the routine messages that the people there had always heard. They were prophets. And people have never liked prophets. In the 1500 years of Israel's history, as Stephen said, "Which of the prophets did they not persecute?"

Those apostles were not diplomatic speakers. They were prophets. And I believe that our country could do with a few prophets at this time, so that we could hear what God is saying. God doesn't care for that which is big and great in the eyes of men.

I am not against meetings like this. But I stopped going to such meetings more than 20 years back. I turn down such invitations now. I know that such meetings can make you famous. You get media exposure. But I have discovered as I have traveled in the villages of our land - where most of my ministry is now - that the people who do the real work are not at a conference like this one. They are unknown and out there in those villages. They can't speak English and they certainly don't know what it is to present a paper. But they are filled with the Spirit, they love the Lord and they go out and bring lost souls to Christ. Praise God for such people. Others organise their missions and become known as mission-leaders and get the honour. But many who are first now will be last when Jesus comes back. So it is good for us to be humble. It is good for us to have low thoughts about ourselves. Perhaps we are not so great in God's eyes as other Christians think we are, because of our degrees and our titles. These may impress men, but not God. In fact they don't impress the devil either. The devil fears a holy man, a man who is genuine, a man who is the same inside as he is on the outside, and a man who never preaches what he does not practice.

People ask me, "Brother Zac, why don't you urge people to go to North India?" I reply, "Jesus taught only what He first did" (Acts 1:1). I haven't lived in North India. So I cannot tell others to do it. I'm not saying that it should not be done. I'm only saying that I cannot preach what I haven't done.

But then I'm not the whole body of Christ. I'm only one part of it. I am an imbalanced member of the body of Christ. I will always be imbalanced. The only balanced man that ever walked on earth was Jesus Christ. You are imbalanced and so am I. Let's not think

that any one of us is more than just one part. Every part is needed - the evangelist, the teacher, the shepherd, the prophet and the apostle - for people to be made members of the body of Christ and for that Body to be built.

What is our calling? It is to make someone who is not a member of the Body of Christ a member of that Body. Isn't that our calling basically? I think we'll all agree on that.

Since the Holy Spirit uses the word, "Body", let me use an illustration from the physical body. Let us say there is a plate here, with a potato (representing an unbeliever), that has to become a member of my body. How does that happen? It happens first of all through evangelism - the hand reaching out and taking that potato.

Evangelism is always the first ministry in this task. That is why I never devalue evangelism. I value it very highly - and especially those who are engaged in this ministry in the heat and dust of North India. I am interested in reading their magazines - I get a number of them in my home - to read about the ministry of these dear brothers of mine who are labouring there. I have been up there now and then to meet some of them too.

Here then is my hand taking the potato from the plate. That potato will never become a part of my body if the "evangelist" (my hand) does not go out and do "evangelism" (put the potato in my mouth) .

But is that all there is to it? If I just keep that potato in my mouth, will it become a part of my body? No, it won't. After a while it will get rotten in my mouth and I will spit it out. That is how some converts get rotten in some of our churches! They are taken in and kept inside the mouth!

But something more has to happen to that potato. It has to be chewed and crushed by my teeth. The potato can then imagine that everything is over. But all is not over! The potato goes down to my stomach, and there finds that acids are mercilessly poured on it. That is a picture of prophetic ministry in the church. You know it's not comfortable when acid is thrown on us. The gentle ministry of being picked up from the plate was so nice. But when acid is thrown on us, that is far from pleasant. The potato is now broken down completely and it no longer looks like a potato. But in a few weeks, lo and behold, it has become blood and flesh and bones - a very part of my body!

Now, whose job was the most important in this task. What ministry do any of us have that we did not receive? If we are humble, we will confess that we are imbalanced. The hand is not more important than the stomach. They complement each other. Unfortunately in Christendom there is this perpetual competition between the members - the hand building its own kingdom, the stomach building its own kingdom, and the mouth building its own!! What do we have then? Not a body, but an "Anatomy Laboratory", with a mouth over here, a stomach over there, a hand here and a leg there. That's not a body!

What do we need most of all? Yes, it is true we need instruction. But we need humility more than anything else. We need to recognise that we are all equally important - every member in Christ's body. And the great mission leader is no more valuable in this ministry than the poor brother who can't speak English properly, but who goes out and brings souls to Christ. They are all part of the same body.

"Come up higher", the Lord says, "and look at things from My viewpoint." Things look very different when viewed from God's viewpoint than from an earthly viewpoint.

Why is it that so many Christian workers have such a high opinion about themselves? Be honest. What are the thoughts you think about yourself, when you are all by yourself? Are they thoughts of humility, recognising that you yourself are nothing?

There are times when I sit outside and look at the stars. I know there are millions of stars and that the whole earth is just a tiny speck in this universe. And I say, "O God, how great You are! How great this universe is! I am such a small little speck of dust on this speck called Earth. And here I am claiming to represent You and preaching such great matters. Please help me to have a sober estimate about myself." I would recommend that all of you say that to God.

God gives grace to the humble. Anybody can have knowledge. But only the humble can receive grace. We need grace far more than we need knowledge.

I have thought of the young people who come to the Lord and who are persecuted by their families for their faith. When such a person comes to one of our churches, what does he see? Does he see the spirit of Jesus Christ there? People around us have such a wrong impression of Christianity.

I've long believed that the first principle of all effective ministry - whether evangelism or whatever - is found in Hebrews 2:17, where it says that Jesus "was made like His brothers in all things ". I want to meditate on that - He was made like His brothers **in everything**.

How can I serve others? I have to be made like them in everything. I have to descend to their level.

Why is it that I cannot communicate with a little ant crawling on the floor? Because I am too big. If I go to that ant in human form, it will be terrified. The only way I can communicate with that ant is by my becoming like it first of all. The only way that God could communicate with us was by His becoming like us. We can all understand that. But let us remember that in our ministry to others too - whether in a local church or in an unreached area - the first principle is this - to be made like them in all things, "to sit where they sit", as Ezekiel said (Ezek.3:15).

That means, for example, that we don't want to exalt ourselves above others in any way. This was why Jesus told His disciples never to take any titles like "Rabbi", "Father", or

any other title. Because a title will exalt you above the people whom you serve. You will overawe them with your greatness, instead of being one like them.

In spite of such a warning, we still have lots of people with titles in Christendom today.

We think we can serve God better by adopting the methods of the world. But that is just not true.

In the Old Testament, we read that the Philistines captured the ark of God once. But they had a problem with it, and so they sent it back on a bullock cart. Years later when David was about to move the ark, he thought, "Hey, that's a good idea. The way that the Law taught, of the Levites carrying the ark on their shoulders, is all right for short distances. But for long distances, the Philistine method is certainly better." And so he too put the ark on a bullock cart. And you know what happened. The oxen stumbled and Uzzah stretched forth his hand to steady the ark. God was angry and smote Uzzah dead on the spot, because he was not a Levite. God wouldn't change His methods. Then David was greatly disturbed. But where did it all begin? It began with David imitating the Philistines. And death came in.

Death always comes in when we imitate the ways of the world, when Christian churches are run the way business enterprises are run, and when money becomes the Number One factor in Christian work.

A good question we could ask ourselves is whether the church or organisation that we are running will survive, if all money stops coming in. Or will the whole thing come crumbling down then? A true work of God may **use** money but will never be **dependent** on money. It will be dependent only on the Holy Spirit.

The Bible says that the Spirit is jealous (Jas.4:5) - jealous when something else or someone else takes His rightful place in the church. It could be music. I'm not against music. I believe we should have the best possible music in our churches, without imitating the world. But we must not depend on music.

For example, at the end of a meeting, if we think that by getting the organ to play softly, we can move people to make a decision, what is that? It is psychological manipulation, not Holy-Spirit power.

If the Word of God is preached in the power of the Spirit, like Jesus preached it and like Peter preached it, you won't need any organ playing softly at the end. You can have it if you like, but it's not going to help. But if you haven't got the power of the Holy Spirit, then you will have to manipulate people psychologically to make them take a decision. But you will discover in the long run that such decisions are only emotional and superficial.

The Holy Spirit is jealous for His rightful place in the church. You can't replace Him with theology. You can't replace Him with music. You can't replace Him with money. Thank

God for all these things. Use them all. Jesus used money. So how can we be against it. It is written that Jesus sang a hymn. In Hebrews 2:12, we read that Jesus Himself is the One Who leads the church in praising the Father. So when we praise God, we are only following our Leader. So how can we be against music. We are not against any of these things. But it's a question of what we depend on.

Do we depend on great personalities or great preachers? No. The Holy Spirit is jealous.

Jesus became a servant. Every Christian leader speaks about a servant life-style and being a servant and many books are written about it too. But what does it mean in practical terms? Let me ask you: How do you treat your coworkers? How do you treat your junior-most coworker, who joined your group just yesterday? Is he really a brother to you or does he live in awe of you? If so, then even if you preach about servanthood until doomsday, I'd say you haven't understood it. You haven't seen Jesus.

Jesus was so simple. He never overawed people. He said, "I am a son of man" - and that means, "an ordinary man". He was the pure and holy Son of God Who had lived from all eternity with the Father. But He came and lived on earth as an ordinary man. He became like His brothers in all things.

For us to become like our brothers in all things, something in us has to die. It says about Jesus that "He humbled Himself to the point of death". Death is the perfect proof of our humility.

The grain of wheat that falls into the ground and dies is guaranteed much fruit. That was one of the things that I discovered when I had this crisis of reality with the Lord 22 years ago. I understood that the greatest work that I could do for the Lord in India was to fall into the ground and die - die to my will, to what people thought about me, to my ambitions, to my goals, to my love of money, to everything - and especially to my Self - so that thereafter Jesus alone would be everything to me, so that I could look up to Him every day and honestly say (like the psalmist), "Whom have I in heaven but Thee and there is nothing and no-one I desire on earth beside Thee" (Psa.73:25).

There are times when I lie down on my bed and say to the Lord, "Lord, my ministry is not my god. You alone are my God. Nobody will ever take Your place. You are everything to me. You can take away my voice, paralyse me or do whatever you like with me. I will still love You with all my heart." Nobody can take away my joy - because in God's presence there is fullness of joy. It is from that fount alone that the rivers of living water can flow through us.

One last thing: Many, many years ago, when I was a young Christian, the Lord spoke to me from 2 Samuel 24:24, where David said, "I will not offer to the Lord that which costs me nothing".

What the Lord spoke to my heart that day was that when He came to earth, He had offered that which cost Him everything. And if I was going to serve Him, I would have to serve Him in that same spirit. Every service of mine must cost me something.

How is it with your service for the Lord? Has it cost you something? We have many people in Christian work in India today, who are earning five to ten times what they would have been earning if they had been in a secular job.

Is that sacrifice?

I made a decision when I quit my job in the Indian Navy, 31 years ago, that I would never receive any money that would raise my monthly income to more than what I would have earned in my secular job. That decision has preserved me for 31 years.

We don't have to judge others. And I am not here to judge you. I don't know many of you and so it is easy for me to say this: Ask yourself what you would have been earning today if you had been in a secular job.

John Wesley used to tell his co-workers, "Let it never be said that you have become rich by preaching the gospel."

Do you know where Christian work suffers the most? Right here, in this area. You cannot serve God and money. That's the issue that we need to deal with first of all. We can spend our time here talking about every other subject under the sun. But if we don't deal with this problem of the love of money, all our service will be useless.

People relocate their residence from one place to another. There is nothing wrong with that. Jesus also relocated His residence from heaven to earth. But when He relocated, it was a step **down**. And it was because He had a genuine concern for people here on earth.

Why have you relocated?

Again I'm not judging you. I'm only asking.

Did you relocate your residence, because you felt that from your new location you could serve the Lord more effectively in India - the land for which you **seem** to have such a great burden? Do you have a genuine burden?

Can we live in the comfort of South India and have a burden for the villages of North India? Maybe you can. But I don't see how I can do that myself.

Can you live in the United States of America and have a burden for India? Yes - but only on paper. On paper you can have a burden for anything!

The devil is a great deceiver. He deceives us thoroughly. He makes us feel that we have a great burden for something when in actual fact we have nothing but hot air!!

I want you to be honest with yourself.

I'm not presenting a paper here. I'm sharing my heart.

And I hope it is God's heart too.

I'm not judging you, my brothers and sisters. God told me years ago, "If you judge others you will destroy yourself."

I stand before God today and say that I'm not judging anyone. I judge myself. And I repent. My life is one of daily repentance - because I see un-Christlikeness in many areas of my own life. I repent and say, "Lord, I didn't speak kindly to that person. I want to learn how to speak".

The man who cannot control his tongue - his Christianity is worth zero, as James says (James 1:26).

And I want to keep that verse before me always.

Paul said something about his coworkers once. When he was looking for someone to send to Philippi, he said he could find only Timothy, because all the rest who were with him then, were seeking their own!! (Phil.2:19-21). Note that Paul did not say this about the heathen but about some of his coworkers. Getting on to Paul's team itself was an honour, for Paul was the type of person who would not permit even a John Mark to continue on his team, because he felt John Mark was not radical enough. Yet Paul felt that most of his coworkers were seeking their own.

Today, many are preaching the gospel and appear to be burdened for souls, but they are really seeking their own gain and comfort. They are promoting themselves.

They are promoting their children and their family members - to take over their work when they retire!!

Saul also wanted to promote Jonathan. But God said, "It's not Jonathan but David who has to take over as the next king." That made Saul furious and he tried to get rid of David, in order to promote his own son.

Do you think that such things are not happening in Christendom today? They are.

When we serve the Lord and speak the truth, we are not going to be popular. But if we seek to please men, we cannot be servants of Christ.

I want to thank God for every brother and sister - and especially for those who labour in difficult situations, who have made sacrifices that we will not know about until Jesus comes again, who are not known in Christian circles, whose names are not heralded and who have no media coverage, but who are God-fearing, humble people, sacrificially

spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ in our land. I want to salute them. I praise God with all my heart for such people. I stand nowhere, when compared to any of them. Many of them are working in our churches and our organisations. Let us follow in their footsteps.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Amen.

CHAPTER TWO

GOD NEEDS MEN

God needs men today -

- *men who will stand before His face and hear His voice daily;*
- *men who have no desire in their heart for anyone or anything other than God Himself;*
- *men who fear God so greatly that they hate sin in every form and love righteousness and truth in all their ways;*
- *men who have overcome anger and sexually sinful thoughts, and who would rather die than sin even in thought or attitude;*
- *men whose daily life-style is one of taking up the cross and pressing on to perfection, and who are constantly working out their own salvation with fear and trembling;*
- *men full of the Holy Spirit, who are so rooted and grounded in love that nothing can ever move them into an unloving attitude towards another human being, however great the provocation;*
- *men who are so rooted and grounded in humility that neither human praise nor spiritual growth, neither a Divinely-endorsed ministry nor anything else will be able to make them lose the awareness of their being less than the least of all the saints;*
- *men who have an understanding of God's nature and purposes through His Word, and who tremble at that Word so that they will not disobey even the smallest commandment or neglect to teach it to others;*
- *men who will proclaim the whole counsel of God and expose religious harlotry and unScriptural human traditions;*

- *men who have the revelation of the Holy Spirit on the secret of godliness, on Christ having come in the flesh and opened a new and living way through the flesh;*
- *men who are diligent and hardworking, but who also have a sense of humour, and who know how to relax and play with children and enjoy God's good gifts in nature;*
- *men who are not ascetics, but who at the same time live a disciplined life and who are not afraid of hardships;*
- *men who have no interest in expensive clothing or sight-seeing and who will not waste their time in unprofitable activities or their money in unnecessary purchases;*
- *men who have mastered their desire for fancy foods and who are not enslaved to music or sport or any other legitimate activity;*
- *men who have been disciplined successfully by God in the fires of affliction, abuse, tribulation, false accusation, physical sickness, financial hardships and opposition from relatives and religious leaders;*
- *men full of mercy, who can sympathise with the worst of sinners and the worst of believers, and have hope for them, because they consider themselves to be the foremost of all sinners;*
- *men who are so deeply rooted in the security of the love of their Heavenly Father that they are never anxious about anything, or afraid of Satan or evil men or difficult situations or anything;*
- *men who have entered into God's rest, believing in the sovereign working of God in all matters for their best and who therefore give thanks always, for all men, for all things and in all circumstances;*
- *men who find their joy in God alone and who are therefore full of the joy of the Lord, having overcome all bad moods;*
- *men of living faith, who have no confidence in themselves or their natural abilities, but complete confidence in God as their unfailing Helper in all situations;*
- *men who live, not by the promptings of their own reason, but by the leading of the Holy Spirit;*
- *men who have been genuinely baptized in the Holy Spirit and fire by Christ Himself (and not just thrilled by some emotional counterfeit or convinced by some theological argument);*

- *men who are living constantly under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, endowed with the supernatural gifts that He has given them;*
- *men who have revelation on the church as the Body of Christ (and not a congregation or a denomination), and who give all their energies, their material wealth and spiritual gifts to build that church*
- *men who have learnt to bridle their tongues through the help of the Holy Spirit and whose tongues are now aflame with the Divine Word;*
- *men who have forsaken all, who are not attached anymore to money or material things, and who desire no gifts from others;*
- *men who can trust God for all their earthly needs and who never hint about their material needs or boast about their labours, either in their conversation or through letters and reports;*
- *men who are not stubborn, but gentle, and open to criticism and eager for correction from older and wiser brothers;*
- *men who have no desire to dominate or advise others (although ready to give advice when asked for), and who have no longing to be considered as `elder' brothers, or leaders, but who only desire to be ordinary brothers and servants of all;*
- *men who are easy to get along with, and who are willing to be inconvenienced and taken advantage of by others;*
- *men who will make no distinction between the millionaire and the beggar, the white-skinned and the dark-skinned, the intellectual and the idiot and the cultured and the barbarian, but who will treat them all alike;*
- *men who can never be influenced by their wife, children, relatives, friends or other believers to cool off even slightly in their devotion to Christ or their obedience to God's commandments;*
- *men who can never be bribed to compromise, by any reward that Satan may offer (whether honour or money or whatever);*
- *men who are fearless witnesses for Christ, fearing neither religious heads nor secular rulers;*
- *men who desire to please no human being on the face of the earth, and who are willing to offend all men, if necessary, in order to please God alone;*

- *men for whom God's glory, God's will and God's kingdom always take priority over mere human need and their own comfort;*
- *men who cannot be pressurised either by others or by their own reason into doing 'dead works' for God, but who are eager and content to do the revealed will of God for their lives alone;*
- *men who have the discernment of the Spirit to distinguish between the soulish and the spiritual in Christian work;*
- *men who look at things from a heavenly viewpoint and not an earthly one;*
- *men who will refuse all earthly honours and titles offered them for their labours for God;*
- *men who know how to pray without ceasing, and also how to fast and pray when needed;*
- *men who have learnt to give generously, cheerfully, secretly and with wisdom;*
- *men who are willing to be all things to all men, so that by all means they might save some;*
- *men who have a longing to see others not only saved, but also made disciples of Christ, and brought to a knowledge of the truth and to obedience to all of God's commandments;*
- *men who have a longing to see a pure testimony established for God in every place;*
- *men who have a burning passion to see Christ glorified in the church;*
- *men who do not seek their own in any matter;*
- *men with spiritual authority and spiritual dignity;*
- *men who will stand ALONE for God in the world, if need be;*
- *totally uncompromising men, like the apostles and prophets of old.*

God's work in the world suffers today, because such men are few in number. Determine with all your heart that you will be such a man for God, in the midst of a sinful and adulterous generation and a compromising Christendom. Since there is no partiality with God, it is possible for you too to be such a man, provided you yourself earnestly desire to be one. Since God demands commitment and obedience only in the conscious area of

one's life, it is possible for you to be such a man, even though the conscious area of your life may be limited. (That area will keep increasing as you walk in the light and press on to perfection). There is no excuse then why you cannot be such a man.

Since nothing good dwells in the flesh, we have to seek for grace from God to have the virtues listed above. Cry out to God daily then, that He will give you grace to be such a man in these the closing days of the age.

CHAPTER THREE

SOME IMPORTANT TRUTHS THAT I HAVE LEARNT

During the 40 years that I have been a born-again Christian, I have learnt some important truths that have encouraged me and given direction and purpose to my life. I share them here with you with the hope that they will be an encouragement to you as well.

1. God loves us as He loved Jesus

"Thou didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me" (John 17:23).

This is the greatest truth that I have discovered in the Bible. It changed me from an insecure, depressed believer to one who has become totally secure in God and full of the joy of the Lord - always.

There are many verses in the Bible that tell us that God loves us, but only this one that tells us the extent of that love - AS MUCH AS HE LOVED JESUS.

Since there is no partiality with our heavenly Father in the way He loves any of His sons, He will certainly be willing to do everything for us, His sons, that He did for His firstborn Son, Jesus. He will help us as He helped Jesus. He will care for us as much as He cared for Jesus. He will be as interested in planning the details of our daily life as He was in planning Jesus' life. Nothing can ever happen to us that will take God by surprise. He has already planned for every eventuality. So we need no longer be insecure. We have been sent to earth with as definite a purpose as Jesus was.

All this is true for you too - but only if you believe it.

Nothing works for the one who does not believe in the Word of God.

2. God delights in honest people

"If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another" (1 Jn.1:9).

To walk in the light means first of all that we hide nothing from God. We tell Him everything, exactly as it is. I am convinced that the first step towards God is honesty. God detests those who are insincere. Jesus spoke against hypocrites more than He spoke against anyone else.

God does not ask us to be holy or perfect first of all but to be honest. This is the starting point of true holiness. And from this spring flows everything else. And if there is one thing that is really easy for anyone of us to do, it is to be honest. So, confess sin immediately to God. Don't call sinful thoughts by "decent" names. Don't say "I was only admiring the beauty of God's creation" when actually you lusted adulterously with your eyes. Don't call "anger" as "righteous indignation". You will never get victory over sin if you are dishonest.

And don't ever call "sin", "a mistake", because Jesus' blood can cleanse you from all your sins, but not from your mistakes!! He does not cleanse dishonest people.

There is hope only for honest people. "He who covers his sin will never prosper" (Prov.28:13).

Why did Jesus say that there was more hope for prostitutes and for thieves to enter God's kingdom than for religious leaders (Matt.21:31). Because prostitutes and thieves make no pretence of being holy.

Many young people are turned away from churches because church-members give them the impression that they themselves have no struggles. And so those young people think, "That holy bunch of people will never understand our problems!!" If this true of us, then we are unlike Christ Who drew sinners to Himself.

3. God delights in a cheerful giver

"God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor.9:7).

This is why God gives man total freedom - both before and after conversion, and after being filled with the Spirit.

If we are like God, we also will not seek to control others or pressurise them. We will give them freedom to be different from us, to have different views from ours and to grow spiritually at their own pace.

All compulsion of any sort is from the devil.

The Holy Spirit fills people, whereas demons possess people. The difference is this: When the Holy Spirit fills anyone, He still gives that person freedom to do whatever he

wants. But when demons possess people they rob them of their freedom and control them. The fruit of being filled with the Spirit is self-control (Gal.5:22,23). Demon-possession however, results in the loss of self-control.

We must remember that any work that we do for God that is NOT done cheerfully, joyfully, freely and voluntarily is a dead work. Any work done for God for a reward or for a salary is also a dead work. Any money given to God under pressure from others has no value at all, as far as God is concerned!!

God values a little done cheerfully for Him far more than a great deal done under compulsion, or done merely to ease one's conscience.

4. Holiness comes by looking unto Jesus

"Let us run the race....looking unto Jesus" (Heb.12:1,2).

The secret of godliness is found in the Person of Christ Who came in our flesh (as 1 Tim.3:16 makes very clear) - and not in the doctrine that Christ came in our flesh. It is through His Person and not through a doctrinal analysis of His flesh, that we become holy.

Any amount of self-effort will never make a sinful heart holy. God has to do a work within us, for that to happen.

Holiness (eternal life) is God's gift - and it can never be attained by works (Rom.6:23). The Bible states that God alone can sanctify us (make us holy) entirely (1 Thess.5:23 says that so plainly that no-one can mistake it). Yet multitudes of believers are struggling to deny themselves in order to be holy. They become Pharisees instead.

"The holiness which is no illusion" (Eph.4:24-Philips) is attained by faith in Jesus - in other words by "looking unto Jesus".

If we keep looking only at a doctrine we will become Pharisees. The purer our doctrine, the greater the Pharisees we will become.

The greatest Pharisees I have met on earth were among those who preached the highest standards of holiness through self-effort!! We have to be careful that we don't end up as one of them!

What it means to look unto Jesus is very clearly explained in Hebrews 12:2. First of all we are to look at Him as One Who lived on earth "enduring His cross" daily - "tempted in all points as we are and yet without sin" (Heb.4:15). He is our Forerunner (Heb.6:20), in Whose footsteps we are to run. Secondly, we are to see Him as the One Who is now "at the right hand of the Father", interceding for us and ready to help us in every trial and temptation.

5. We must be continually filled with the Holy Spirit

"Be (being) filled with the Spirit" (Eph.5:18 - Literal).

It is impossible to live the Christian life, as God wants us to, if we are not continually filled with the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to serve God as we should without being anointed with the Spirit and receiving His supernatural gifts. Jesus Himself needed to be anointed.

The Holy Spirit has come to make us like Jesus in our personal lives as well as in our ministry (See 2 Cor.3:18). God fills us with the Spirit in order to conform us to the likeness of Christ in our character, and to equip us to serve as Jesus served. We do not have the same ministry that Jesus had, and so we won't be able to do what Jesus did in His ministry. But we can be as fully equipped to serve God as Jesus Himself was - to fulfil OUR OWN ministry.

All that is required is an adequate thirst and faith, on our part, for rivers of living water to flow out through us (Jn.7:37-39).

We must earnestly long for the gifts of the Spirit if we are to have them(1 Cor.14:1). Otherwise we will never have them.

A church without the gifts of the Holy Spirit is like a man who may be living but who is deaf, blind, mute and lame - and therefore useless.

6. The way of the cross is the way of life

"If we died with Him, we shall also live with Him" (2 Tim.2:11)

There is no way for us to have the life of Jesus manifested in our body other than by accepting death to our Self-life in all the situations that God plans and arranges for us (2 Cor.4:10,11).

We must "consider ourselves dead to sin" (Rom.6:11) in all situations, if we are to overcome sin. We must "mortify the deeds of the body through the Spirit" if we are to live (Rom.8:13). The Holy Spirit will always lead us to the cross in our daily life.

We are sent by God into situations where we are "slaughtered the whole day long" (Rom.8:36) and "delivered to death for Jesus sake" (2 Cor.4:11). In such situations, we must accept "the dying of Jesus" (2 Cor.4:10), so that the life of Jesus may be manifest in us.

7. Man's opinions are fit only for the garbage bin

"Stop regarding man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for why should he be esteemed?" (Isa.2:22)

When a man's breath leaves his nostrils, he is no better than the dust that we walk on. So why should we value man's opinion.

If we are not rooted and grounded in the fact that the opinions of ALL human beings put together are only fit for the garbage-bin, we will never be able to serve the Lord effectively. If we seek to please even one man, we cannot be servants of Christ (Gal.1:10).

Every man's opinion is worthless compared to God's opinion. One who is convinced of this will thereafter seek only God's approval over His life and ministry. He will never seek to impress people or to justify himself before them.

8. God detests all that this world considers great

"That which men esteem highly is detestable in God's sight" (Luke 16:15).

The things that are considered great in the world, not only have no value in God's eyes, but are actually an abomination to Him. Since all worldly honour is an abomination to God, it must be an abomination to us too.

Money is something that everyone on earth considers valuable. But God says that those who love money and long to get rich will suffer the following eight consequences sooner or later (1 Tim. 6:9,10).

- (a) they will fall into temptation,
- (b) they will fall into a trap,
- (c) they will fall into foolish desires,
- (d) they will fall into harmful desires,
- (e) they will plunge into ruin,
- (f) they will plunge into destruction,
- (g) they will wander away from the faith and
- (h) they will pierce themselves with many a pang.

I have seen this happen again and again to believers everywhere.

One of the main reasons why a prophetic word from the Lord is hardly ever heard these days in our land, is because most preachers are lovers of money. Jesus said that the true riches (the prophetic word being one of them) would not be given by God to those who

were unfaithful with money (Lk.16:11). This is why we hear so many boring sermons and so many boring testimonies in church-meetings and conferences.

9. Nobody can harm us except we ourselves

"Who can harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?" (1 Pet.3:13)

God is so powerful that He makes ALL THINGS work together for the good of those who love Him and who are called according to His purpose - that is, for those who have no ambition on earth outside of His will for their lives (Romans 8:28). One who has selfish ambitions cannot claim this promise. But if we accept the will of God totally, we can claim this promise every minute of our life on earth. Nothing can harm us.

Everything that others do to us - good or evil, accidental or deliberate - will go through the filter of Romans 8:28 and will come through working for our very best - conforming us each time a little more to the likeness of Christ (Rom.8:29) - which is the good that God has planned for us. This filter works perfectly every single time for those who fulfil the conditions listed in this verse.

Further, 1 Peter 3:13 tells us that no-one can harm us if we are "zealous for what is good". Unfortunately this is not as well known a verse as Romans 8:28 is. But we must popularise it now. However, this promise too is applicable only to those who are zealous to keep their hearts good towards all people. It will be impossible for any demon or human being to harm such a believer.

So whenever any Christian complains that others have harmed him, he is indirectly admitting that he does not love God, is not called according to God's purpose and has not been zealous for what is good. Otherwise, whatever those others did to him would have only worked for his good, and then he would not have had any complaints at all.

Actually, the only one who can harm you is you yourself - by your unfaithfulness and your wrong attitudes to others.

I am nearly 60 years old now and I can honestly say that no-one has ever succeeded in harming me in my entire life. Many have tried to do so, but EVERYTHING they did only worked for my very best and for the good of my ministry. So I can praise God for those people too. Those who have opposed me have been mostly so-called "believers" who have not understood God's ways. I am giving you my testimony only to encourage you to believe that this can be your testimony too - always.

10. God has a perfect plan for each of our lives

"We are created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph.2:10).

Long ago, when God chose us in Christ, He also planned what we should do with our earthly lives. Our duty now is to find out that plan - day by day - and to follow it. We can never make a better plan than God's.

We must not imitate what others do, for God's plan for each of His children is different. God's plan for Joseph, for example, was for him to stay in the palace in Egypt and to live in great comfort for the last 80 years of his life. On the other hand, God's plan for Moses was for him to leave the palace in Egypt and to live in great discomfort for the last 80 years of his life - in the wilderness. If Moses had followed Joseph's example, through the love of comfort and ease, he would have missed God's will for his own life.

In exactly the same way today, God may want one brother to live all his life in comfort in the U.S.A., and another brother to toil all his life in the heat and dust of North India. Each must be convinced about God's plan for his own life instead of comparing his lot with that of the other brother and being jealous of him and criticising him.

I know that God called me to serve Him in India. But I have never demanded that anyone else should have my calling.

We will, however, never be able to find God's will, if we are seeking our own honour or if we love money or comfort or the approval of men.

11. Knowing God intimately is the secret of being strong

"The people who know their God will be strong" (Dan.11:32)

Today, God does not want us to know Him second-hand through others. He invites even the youngest believer to know Him personally (Heb.8:11). Jesus defined eternal life as knowing God and Jesus Christ personally (John 17:3). This was the greatest passion of Paul's life and must be our greatest passion too (Phil.3:10).

One who desires to know God intimately, will have to listen to Him always. Jesus said that the only way man could keep himself spiritually alive was by listening to EVERY word that proceeded from God's mouth (Matt.4:4). He also said that to sit at His feet and listen to Him was the most important thing in the Christian life (Lk.10:42).

We must develop the habit that Jesus had of listening to the Father from early morning every day (Isa.50:4), right through the day; and then to be in a listening attitude in the hours of night when we are asleep too - so that if we ever wake up from our sleep at night, we can say, "Speak, Lord, Your servant is listening" (1 Sam.3:10).

Knowing God will make us overcomers in all situations - because God has a solution for every problem that we face - and if we listen to Him, He will tell us what that solution is.

12. The new covenant is far superior to the old covenant

"Jesus is the Mediator of a better covenant" (Heb.8:6).

Many Christians do not know that there is a fundamental difference between the old and the new covenants(Heb.8:8-12). The new covenant is as much superior to the old, as Jesus is to Moses. (2 Cor.3 and Heb.3).

Whereas the old covenant could purify only a person's external life through the fear of judgment and the promise of reward, the new covenant changes us from within, not through threats and promises, but through the Holy Spirit giving us the nature of Christ - a nature that is totally pure and loving.

There is a vast difference between a pig being kept clean through being restrained by chains (fear of punishment under the Law), and a cat that keeps itself clean because that is its inner nature. That example illustrates the difference between the two covenants.

13. We are called to be rejected and persecuted by men

"All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (2 Tim.3:12)

Jesus told His disciples that in the world they would face tribulation, (Jn.16:33); and He prayed to the Father NOT to take His disciples out of the world (Jn.17:15). The apostles taught believers that only through much tribulation they could enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:23).

Jesus said that if people had called the Head of the house Beelzebul, the members of His household would be called by worse names (Matt.10:25). It is thus that we know we are faithful members of His household. Some of the names that I have been called, by other "believers", have been: "Devil", "Son of the Devil", "Evil spirit", "Antichrist", "Deceiver", "Terrorist", "Murderer", and "Diotrephes". It has been a great honour to be identified thereby as a part of Jesus' household. All who serve the Lord faithfully will experience this.

Jesus also said that a true prophet would not be honoured by "his own relatives" (Mk.6:4). Jesus Himself was not accepted by His family members. Every true prophet of God will be rejected and dishonoured by his own relatives, even today. In the same way, a true apostle will also be "slandered and treated as the scum of the world and the dregs of all things" (1 Cor.4:13). Suffering and rejection have always been the appointed lot of God's greatest servants.

The teaching that the church will be raptured before the "great tribulation" is a popular one with most believers because it comforts their flesh to hear it. But Jesus made it very clear in Matthew 24:29-31 that He will return to take His elect only AFTER the great tribulation.THERE IS NOT A SINGLE VERSE IN THE ENTIRE NEW TESTAMENT THAT TEACHES THAT THE CHURCH WILL ESCAPE THE GREAT TRIBULATION BY BEING RAPTURED OUT OF IT. This doctrine was invented by man in England in the mid-1800s.

We must now prepare the church in our country for persecution.

14. We must receive all whom God has received

"God has placed the members in the Body just as He desired...that there should be no division in the Body" (1 Cor.12:18,25).

God has raised up men at different times in different lands to restore a pure testimony for Him. But after those men of God died, their followers have made their groups exclusive and cultistic.

But the body of Christ is larger than any group. And we must never forget that. The bride of Christ is found in many, many groups today.

So we must seek for fellowship with all whom the Lord has accepted, even though we may not be able to work together with many of them, because of differences in interpretation of the Word of God.

15. We must treat every human being with dignity

"With our tongue, we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way" (James 3:9,10).

Any word or action that degrades a human being is never from God. It is always from Satan who forever seeks to demean and degrade people.

We are commanded to speak "with gentleness and respect" (1 Pet.3:15) to all people - whether they be our wives, our children, younger people, beggars or enemies. All men must be treated with dignity. For example, when giving a gift to a poorer brother, we must do so, without robbing him of his dignity as a human being. We must be his brother and not his benefactor.

16. We must reveal our financial needs only to God

"God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil.4:19).

Full-time Christian workers must trust God for all their financial needs and must reveal those needs only to Him. God will then prompt His children to supply their needs. They must not live "by faith in God and hints to other believers", as many live today.

"The Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel" (1 Cor.9:14). So those who serve the Lord fulltime are permitted to receive gifts from other believers. But they must never receive a salary. There is a vast difference between gifts and a salary. Gifts cannot be demanded, whereas a salary can be demanded. Here lies the cause for the backslidden condition of most Christian churches and institutions today.

We must however, never receive any gifts for our personal or family use from people who are poorer than us. If such people give us gifts, we must either give the money away to someone poorer than them or put the money into the offering-box for the Lord's work.

Here are "*Ten Principles*" on money that all fulltime workers will do well to take heed to:

1. *Never* make your financial needs known to anyone but God (Phil.4:19).
2. *Never* accept money from unbelievers (3 John 7).
3. *Never* expect any gifts from anyone (Psa.62:5).
4. *Never* allow anyone to control you or influence your ministry by giving you money.
5. *Never* accept money from those who don't receive your ministry.
6. *Never* accept money for your personal or family needs, from anyone poorer than you.
7. *Never* be dependent on any man for your financial needs.
8. *Never* handle God's money in a way that would cause others to suspect mishandling (2 Cor.8:20,21).
9. *Never* be excited when you receive money.
10. *Never* be depressed when you lose money.

Conclusion

I hope these truths will not only encourage you, but liberate you as well. If you are serious about your walk with the Lord and your ministry, you should take all these truths seriously in your daily life.
