

Four Steps in Fellowship With God

by Zac Poonen

Fellowship with God is a two-way conversation that requires constant communication, listening, and speaking.

Duration: 1:00:19

Scripture: Psalm 73:25, Isaiah 6:3, Habakkuk 3:17-18, Luke 18:1, John 4:23-24, Acts 20:35, 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18

Topics: "Prayer Life", "Worship"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of communion with God through prayer, thanksgiving, praise, and worship. It highlights the need to have a deep, intimate fellowship with God, focusing on listening to Him, being thankful for His blessings, praising Him for who He is, and ultimately worshipping Him above all else.

Transcript

What is on my heart this evening is to talk about communion with God or fellowship with God and I want to talk especially about four steps. Prayer, thanksgiving, praise and worship. Words which are very much misunderstood or not understood by many Christians.

And as you listen you will discover how little we know about these very important things. The whole purpose of Christ dying on the cross was to bring us into fellowship with God. Fellowship means intimate communion where we talk to one another.

I often ask young believers, do you know Jesus as a friend? You know, we are called to have fellowship with God. John at the end of his life writes in 1 John chapter 1, these things we are writing to you, he says that we might have fellowship with him. So, Jesus said in Luke chapter 18, let's start with prayer.

Luke 18 verse 1. Jesus said, men and women, people need to at all times, they ought to pray. You know, I used to read books on prayer about great men of God who prayed for two hours a day and four hours a day. And I'll tell you honestly, every one of those books discouraged me because they only made me feel more condemned that I was not doing that.

So, I looked in the Bible. I've had to change many of my views. When I read Christian books, I have to change my views when I read the Bible because I find the Bible says something else.

So, when I read the Bible, I wanted to find out how many hours did Jesus say we should pray every day? I discovered it. Jesus said we ought to pray all the time. He never spoke about two hours or four hours or

any such thing.

Those are all human ideas. So, I said, OK. I am not going to read the books on prayer.

I am going to read the Bible. It says, men pray at all times. I read in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 as if to confirm what Jesus said.

1 Thessalonians 5.17. Pray without ceasing for this is the will of God, verse 18, for you in Christ Jesus. That settled it. In the mouth of two witnesses everything is established.

Pray at all times. Pray without ceasing. This is God's will for you.

So, I understood. I put aside all those books which told me that somebody prayed for two hours or four hours. And I said, no.

Jesus said we got to pray all the time. There is no such thing as praying for two hours or four hours. You won't find it in the Bible.

In fact, I am surprised at the number of non-biblical things that believers believe. You would be surprised. I could make a big list of it.

I almost felt like writing a book on it. The number of things that Christians believe which are not in the Bible. I call it Revelation chapter 23.

Have you seen Revelation chapter 23? It's a huge chapter. It's at least got a thousand verses. Look it up.

It's at the end of your Bible. Revelation chapter 23. All types of traditions of men, all types of things which are not in the Bible.

One of those is about prayer. Let you be honest. Don't you feel guilty sometimes that you haven't spent half an hour in prayer, one hour in prayer? When you hear that somebody spent two hours in prayer, oh, man of God, four hours in prayer.

I used to feel, I am telling you honestly, I used to feel exactly like you, condemned. Till I read in the Bible that men ought to pray all the time. Pray without ceasing.

So, I tried to understand what prayer was. Not from the books on prayer which condemned me. That those are like, you know, feats, like these muscular, in the Olympic Games they have people lift so much weight, so many kilos and all that.

I can't do all that. So, I couldn't do all these feats of four hours in prayer. I said, what is it? What is prayer like? Is there something that I do all the time? That you do all the time? What is it? Can you tell me something you do all the time? Breathing.

Right. I got it. Prayer is like breathing.

That opened my eyes. Oh, so, that's how I am supposed to pray. Like breathing.

And what about these special times of prayer that we have sometimes, half an hour? Those are like, you know, people who have asthma and different types of lung problems. They are told to spend, do deep breathing exercises for half an hour. To expand your lungs.

Yeah, that's also necessary. I am not against it. But you don't just sort of do deep breathing exercise for half an hour and then say, okay, I am going to stop breathing now, I am going to do other things.

No. Those deep breathing exercises are in order for you to breathe properly all the time. So, I began to learn things about prayer which I have never read in any book.

In fact, I discovered all types of things in the Bible which I don't find in any book. The Holy Spirit gives us revelation. I have been very excited to find a lot of things like that.

One of those things is about prayer. And the other thing, I said, now, how to do this? What does it mean to breathe all the time? I mean, breathing is the very essence of our life. If you take away breath, that's the end of the man.

You can take away his fingers, hands, everything he can live but you take away breath, he is finished. And I realized that prayer is the type of communion with God that is the essence of my spiritual life. And if it is like breathing, then it must be something which I am not even conscious of many times.

See, I am not all the time conscious I am breathing. Except when I do some deep breathing exercises, then I am conscious of it. But at other times, I am not conscious.

It's a sort of thing that goes on all the time. I breathe in and breathe out and breathe in and breathe out and breathe in and breathe out and it goes on all the time. So, I realized that prayer is a sort of a fellowship and communion with God that sometimes I am conscious of and the rest of the time I may be unconscious of but still that fellowship is going on.

It's wonderful. See, I don't have to all the time talk to my wife to know that I am in fellowship with her. My wife may be hundreds of miles away from me, I am in fellowship with her.

I don't have to always keep her on the phone line to make sure that I am in fellowship with her. Those are people who have problem marriages who got to keep talking to their wife all the time. No, it's a relationship.

And prayer leads to a type of relationship we have with the father. There are specific times of prayer, there are specific requests we make, it's called supplication. Supplication means specific request.

There is a place for that. Prayer is this constant line of communication with God that's always open. And I thought of it like, you know, a telephone.

A telephone conversation. That is another picture I got in my mind. One was breathing.

You know, my mind thinks in illustrations. If you have heard my messages, you have discovered that long ago. And it helps me a lot.

When I think, Jesus used it all the time. He spoke about light and salt and birds and flowers and how the flowers are clothed and so many things. I found that when I see a picture, I can understand it better.

So, I think if Jesus were living in the 20th century, he would have spoken about prayer like a telephone conversation with God. Now, so I began to think of a telephone conversation. Supposing I am speaking in a telephone to someone who is much younger than me in the Lord.

Say a new believer and if we have half an hour together in the telephone, I think I may speak about 25 minutes and let him speak 5 minutes. But if the person at the other end of the line is a much more godly man than me, I will speak for 5 minutes and let him speak for 25 minutes. Right? I think you would do the same.

Supposing I go and visit a godly man or speak to a man on a telephone. Godly man are really much more mature than me. Say, 100 times more mature than me.

And I speak to him on the telephone and I speak for 25 or 28 minutes and let him speak for 2 minutes. What would you think of me? What an arrogant fellow this fellow is. He thinks that he can talk for such a long time to this godly man and I am missing out on something.

I could have learnt a lot if I let him speak. So, what do you think of if the person at the other end of the telephone line is God himself? How much time do you speak and how much time do you let him speak? Shall I tell you how most people talk to God? It's usually a big shopping list. Lord, this is my shopping list for today.

All these things I need. Okay? Amen. You didn't even let him talk for one minute.

Can you see the arrogance there? The fantastic arrogance that you think you are so spiritual, even more spiritual than God himself. And you don't even let him talk to you. You just talk, this, this, this.

Amen. Now, you ask yourself honestly, isn't that how you pray? Then I learnt something else about prayer. That in a telephone there is a earpiece and a mouthpiece.

And God has given us two ears and how many mouths? So, we must listen twice as much as we speak. So, I said, Lord, I want to listen to you more than I speak. I speak too much.

After all, why do I need to give a big shopping list to God? Is there something that he doesn't know that I need? Do I have to inform him that somebody is sick which he didn't know about? Is there anything, any information I can give to him in prayer which he didn't know about? Think about it. All the long, long information we give to God about, Lord, you know this is happening here. And that's happening there.

In case you didn't know, Lord, this is happening here and that's happening there. I tell you, it completely changed my whole understanding of prayer. When I decided not to read all these books on prayer but to read the Bible.

In a hundred and one areas, you will get the truth if you go only to the Bible. Or listen to somebody who directs you to the Bible, to verse and scripture. And get rid of these wrong concepts that we have put into our head for years.

It's very difficult to get it out of our head when we have already put it in. I grew up in an Orthodox church. My parents were members of what was called a Syrian Orthodox church.

Just like other Orthodox churches, Russian, Romanian, so many Orthodox, Greek. Exactly the same, praying for the dead, praying to Mary and everything else. And when I was sprinkled as a little baby and when I was born again, when I was nearly 20 years old, I started reading the Bible.

I had never read the Bible through before. I saw so many things in the Bible which are never taught in the Orthodox church. I made one decision which is one of the most important decisions I ever made as a

Christian.

I said, Lord, if I ever find anything in the Bible which is contrary to what I've learned all my life, I'll throw away what I've learned all my life and accept what's written in your word. That is the thing that revolutionized my life and set me on the path of spirituality. To accept God's word and not even to accept the advice written in so many books by so many godly people, if they cannot show me in scripture.

A lot of books nowadays that you get in the bookshops, Christian bookshops, are very often the opinions of men. Even many sermons, they turn to one verse in the beginning and then never refer to the Bible again. So, whenever I've written a book, I've written, you've probably seen on the website, 25 books at least.

I've sometimes challenged people. I mean, there are two books of those which are testimony. Leave aside those books.

Any other book, I said, you open on any page of it, any page of any one of those other 23 books, you'll find a scripture reference either on the left side or the right side. Definitely. Because my whole aim in writing a book is to drive a person to scripture.

Not to give him my ideas which are useless. My words are not going to bring faith to anybody. My aim is to drive that person to scripture.

And I say, if you look up that scripture, you'll get faith. So, if I talk about prayer, you must find it in scripture. Pray without ceasing.

In everything give thanks. And listening in the earpiece is as important as speaking. Yes, speak to God.

Do you remember what Jesus said in Luke chapter 10? When he was in the house of Mary and Martha? And as soon as he came there, Martha said, Boy, I must go and get some good food for Jesus and his disciples. Don't you think that was a good idea? And there she was sweating in the kitchen, sacrificing and serving and working so hard, making all the, I don't know what she made, but whatever she made there, she wasn't making it for herself. She was making it for 13 hungry men.

They were the disciples of Jesus. She was serving the Lord. And here was her sister Mary, not helping her one bit in the kitchen, just sitting and listening to what Jesus had to say.

And she, Martha was busy serving the Lord and irritated with Mary to help her. She came to Jesus to complain and said, Lord, Luke 10 verse 40, Don't you care that my sister has left me all alone to do all the work in the kitchen? And what a surprise she got. Jesus said, Martha, the problem is with you, not with your sister.

You think I'm so interested in all that fancy cooking you're making for me? I'm not interested in your food. Do you know that the most important thing in life is not food? It's the same thing he told the devil. Man shall not live by food alone.

Same thing he's telling Martha. You're worried about all that food? I'm not interested. Man shall live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

That's what he said to Martha. Food is not the important thing. The words that proceed from my mouth, Mary is more interested in listening to that.

And he said something else. Verse 42. There's only one thing that is needful in life.

About 50 years ago, when I was born again, I'm very thankful that the Lord spoke to me that word. One thing is needful in your life. The first book I ever wrote, Supreme Priorities, the first chapter I wrote about one thing is needful.

Because it gripped me that the most important thing in life is to listen to what Jesus is saying. Even serving Him is not so important. In fact, my service will be effective if I first listen.

If I serve Him without listening, I'll be like Martha, wasting my time. And that's why a lot of people who serve the Lord like that end up with nervous breakdowns and they become grumpy and sour and critical and all types of things. But I find serving the Lord is the most happiest experience of all in my life.

Because serving is not the most important thing for me. It's listening. So, I discovered that in prayer, it's not just speaking, it's listening.

How can you say you have fellowship with somebody if you do all the talking and don't even let him speak? That's not fellowship. That's just telling another person how important you are. Telling another person how much he must listen to you.

Imagine how foolish it is to stand before God and make Him listen to all that you have to say. And you have no time to listen to Him. So, I decided that for me, prayer is going to be more listening than talking.

And so, you know, sometimes we are in church prayer meetings. And, you know, in big church prayer meetings, somebody is praying in that corner and you can't even hear what he is saying. And sometimes there are long silences.

But those are the best parts for me. When I can't hear what that guy is saying over there, I say, Lord, I can't hear what he is saying. I can listen to you now.

Or the long silences. Those are the best times of prayer meeting for me. Because then I can listen.

Those are the times, in the olden days, I used to get bored. What to do now? I can't even hear long silences. Have you felt bored in prayer meetings like that? Not for me.

I learned to listen. I keep the phone close to the ear. I say, Lord, what are you trying to say to me, Lord? Sometimes when I wake up in the middle of the night, I say what Samuel said.

Speak, Lord, your servant is listening. What are you trying to say to me? I want to hear. I hope what I share with you will completely revolutionize your ideas on prayer.

You learn to walk with God. You learn to have fellowship with Him. Those are the words of Jesus.

One thing is needful and Mary has chosen that good part. It's not serving me. It's listening to me.

Are you discouraged that you can't preach like somebody else? Or sing like somebody else? Or serve like somebody else? Or are you very proud that you have some gift by which you can serve God? Your value of your Christian life depends on how much you listen. And if I listen and then speak, that's fellowship, that's prayer. And the result of that such prayer life will be that you will always have a word for people who are in need.

I don't mean in a pulpit. In a pulpit or in personal conversation. 99.9% of Christians never get into a pulpit.

But all 100% of Christians meet other people, don't you? Every day. Many of those people are weary. They need to have a word from the Lord.

And they will have a word from the Lord through you. If you know how to pray, where a major part of your prayer is listening. Listening and speaking.

When you see two people talking to each other, a husband and wife. I talk to my wife. I don't do all the talking.

No. She doesn't do all the talking either. We talk to each other.

That's fellowship. You talk to God like that? Be honest. You got to be honest.

I tell you, God will help you if you are honest. If you pretend, God will never help you. Just be honest and say, Lord, all my prayer life is just talking, talking, talking, talking, talking and say amen and go home.

I want to be honest. I have insulted you for so many years. Imagine if every time you visited somebody's home, all you did was talk, talk and say okay, goodbye.

And you come next day for another visit and you do the same old thing and for five years you do like that. I don't think there is a greater way you can insult anybody than that. Never allow the other person to talk at all.

But you ask yourself whether you have prayed like that to God. You have insulted Him for years because you got your ideas of prayer from books, not from the Bible. If you had read the Bible, you would have read that, one thing is needful, what Mary is doing.

She wasn't talking, she was listening. Let me urge you, my dear brothers and sisters, read the Bible. And listen to preachers who will direct you to the Bible.

You won't go astray then. So that is prayer. So I hope you got some wrong ideas set right in the matter of prayer.

And we can make specific requests to God. They are called supplication. I say, Lord, I need this.

I will tell you something about that also. When we ask God for something, it must be like a circle. God puts a burden in my heart.

That's the first half of the circle. Burden. I pray that prayer back to God.

It's the second half of the circle. It's called faith. Two most important requirements in asking God for something.

Burden which God has to give me. Pray it back in faith. It's always an answer.

When you pray without a burden, well, it's like playing the lottery. You may win the ticket, you may not win. A lot of people's prayers like that.

I heard of some, I don't know which non-Christian religion it was, where the people go to some idol which is some distance away. And they write their prayer in a piece of paper and wrap it up in a piece of mud and fling it at the idol. If it sticks, perhaps it will be answered.

If it doesn't stick to the idol, then you don't know. I think a lot of Christian's prayer is also like that. To fling all these things at God, we don't know which will get an answer and which will not get an answer.

Is that how you talk to your earthly fathers? Look how the apostles prayed. We have this confidence that if you ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if He has heard us, we know that we got the answer from Him.

That's what we read in 1 John 5. That's how they prayed. It was not this hit and miss. You know, I bought a lottery ticket.

I may win it or not. I don't know. A lot of Christian's prayer is like that.

It's not meant to be like that. So, a burden. I listen and I pray back to God.

And when God has spoken to me, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. If I don't hear, I don't have faith. Romans 10.17 is very clear.

Faith comes by hearing, not by speaking. Faith comes by hearing. And if there's a lack of faith, I mean faith for real things.

Not this third rate counterfeit faith that's spoken of by preachers today that's only for money and for earthly things. Prayer for something eternal. Jesus had the habit of listening.

Let me show you verse Isaiah 15, verse 4. The Lord God has given me the tongue of disciples to know how to give a right word to a weary person who comes to me. What a word! To have a right word for a weary person who comes to me. How to sustain him? So that he doesn't sink under the weight of his problems.

And how do I get that word? God, my father, awakens me up morning by morning and he awakens up my ear to listen. Isaiah 50, verse 4. And because I listen, I have a word for the guy who comes across my path that day who is needy. I prayed that prayer for many years.

I said, Lord, I have to stand so often in a pulpit. That I don't want to just get up and take a Bible study on Ephesians or some Bible study on scientification or something like that. No.

I want to have the word which you have for needy people in that congregation. I don't know they are needy, but you know it. You love them so much that you have a word in season for every single one who is there.

And I want it. I believe you will give it to me. Not because I am a great man, but because you love the people.

Don't you love those people? Of course God does. And if God loves people, he will give his word. I mean, if he can speak through a donkey, why can't he speak through me? He spoke through a donkey to Bella.

If you have faith, God can do it. So, that's prayer. I want to go to the next step.

Thanksgiving. You know, very often in our churches, nowadays it has become very popular, particularly in the last 20-30 years, for churches to have what they call praise and worship. It's definitely not worship.

I don't know why they call it worship because they don't know what worship is. And there is certain amount of praise. It's probably thanksgiving and praise.

It's more accurate to say that. If you don't believe me, instead of singing some of these songs, it's alright singing in the meeting. When you go home, read the words of those songs.

So that you think, what did I actually say to God today in the meeting? You will find, you didn't even think about it perhaps. Thanksgiving. Lord, what is thanksgiving? Thanksgiving is asking God for nothing.

It's thanking Him for what He has already done. Thank you for dying for me on the cross. Thank you for this, that and the other.

So many things God has done for me. But thank Him for it. Thank Him for help.

Thank Him for so many things. Which we don't thank, usually thank God for. You remember the story of the ten lepers who came to Jesus once.

It's a very beautiful story in Luke chapter 17. Verse 11. While Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem.

He was going between Samaria and Galilee and there were ten leprous men who stood at a distance because the lepers were not allowed to come near the others. And they raised their voices. This is the thing I want you to notice.

They were praying. They raised their voices and said, Jesus Master, have mercy on us. And when He saw them, He said, Luke 17.14 Go and show yourself to the priests.

And as they were going, they were all cleansed. Their leprosy suddenly disappeared. Their noses came back to the proper size.

Their stubby fingers grew up to become proper fingers again. They started having sensation in their leprous skin. And they said, boy, this is wonderful.

And only one of them thought, I better go back and thank Jesus for what He did for me. Only one out of ten. Why didn't the others go back? Why is it that we don't go back to the Lord with thanksgiving as much as we go to Him with prayer when we are in need? I don't know.

Maybe one of them said, I think it was already improving a little bit the last few weeks. I sort of sensed an improvement. It just became alright.

I don't think there is anything miraculous about it. I find that type of attitude sometimes when we pray in desperate need to the Lord. For our children who are sick or something.

And when they are healthy, we say, Oh, it's this medicine or this doctor. We give the glory to some chemical or to man, not to God. But this one man, and he was not even a Jew.

The others were Jews. One was a Samaritan. Samaritans are the ones Jews despised.

But that was the person who thought, I must go back and give thanks to God. And it says, he came back and with the same loudness of voice with which he prayed. It says, he fell on his face and with the verse 15, with a loud voice.

He said, I ask God with a loud voice. I am going to thank Him with a loud voice. He said, thank you.

Does Jesus expect that? Does He expect people to come and thank Him? Listen to it. Jesus says, Hey, weren't there ten people whose prayers were answered? Where are the nine? But because this man came back with the spirit of thanksgiving, he got more than those other nine people got. It's always like that.

Those who learn to thank God always get more than those who only pray. And if you find that your life is not what it should be, it's probably you are praying a lot but you are not thanking God enough. Sometimes we don't thank God until we lose something.

You see, many people never think of their heart till they get a heart attack. Then they realize for how many years that heart has been pumping, pumping, pumping faithfully and we never even thought about it. It's like that with many other things in our life.

We take for granted Only a blind man appreciates the value of sight. Only a deaf man appreciates the value of hearing. Those of us who have got good eyesight and hearing, I wonder if we have even once thanked God for our eyes and our ears.

No, we don't. That's accepted. We don't have to thank God for all that.

But this man came and said, Lord, thank you. Thank you for healing me. It's all your work.

I am deeply grateful. I am not a Jew. I am not a descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

I didn't have that privilege. I am from a despised race. I am deeply thankful for your healing me.

He was a Samaritan, it says in verse 16. And Jesus says, Was there no one among all these Jewish people to give glory to God except this foreigner? And Jesus said, Rise, go your way. Your faith has saved you.

The others got healing. You got healing plus salvation. He got more than those other people got.

It's always like that. When we learn to thank God, we get more than the people who only pray. You know why? You remember the words of Jesus in Acts 20 verse 35? What did he say? You don't know Acts 20 verse 35? It is more blessed to give than to receive.

These nine people received. What did the Samaritan do? Gave thanks to God. He got more blessing than the others because it's true.

It is more blessed to give than to receive. He gave. I am not saying there is no blessing in receiving.

Acts 20 verse 35, Jesus did not say there is no blessing in receiving. No, no, no. What did he say? There is more blessing in giving than in receiving.

Have you received something from the Lord? Praise the Lord. You got a blessing. You learn to give thanks for it.

You will get some more. Can you think of the number of things you have missed in your life? Because you did not develop the simple habit of thanksgiving. Just like those nine Jewish people with all their Bible knowledge.

They did not know how to say thank you. But the Samaritans without Bible knowledge learn to say thank you. You know, we teach our children.

Say thank you to uncle. Say thank you to auntie. I have to say to you.

Say thank you to God, brother. Say thank you to God's sister. It's civilization.

It's culture. No, we have to have a thankful heart. Lord, I am deeply thankful for what you have done for me.

Deeply thankful for dying for my sins. I can almost never sing about the cross and the blood of Jesus without weeping. Even now.

Fifty years after I am converted. I still feel very deeply moved in my heart whenever I think of Jesus dying for me on the cross. I cannot take it lightly.

I am deeply thankful that a sinner like me, He saved me. Are you thankful? When you are thankful to God, you also become thankful to men. I want to ask you, you are married people.

How many times have you knelt down by your bed all by yourself and said, Lord, thank you for giving me a good wife. Thank you for giving me a good husband. I don't mean saying that when he is present or she is present.

That may be just to impress the other person. I am saying when you are all alone. When you are all alone, you say it, you really mean it.

When you say it when the husband or wife is there, that may be just because you had a fight and you want to sort of reconcile and say that. But I mean when you are all alone, if you say it, you really mean it. I have said that to God many times.

I said, Lord, thank you for giving me such a wonderful wife. I don't deserve her. And I don't say it when she is around as much as I say it when I am alone.

Have you thanked God for your children? You may find that they improve when you start thanking God for them. So many things we take for granted. Do you know how much a blessing you have missed in your life because you didn't develop the habit that Samaritan knew who didn't have a Bible to thank Jesus for what He has done.

There is a lovely verse in Acts 17 verse 30 which says the times of ignorance God overlooks. But now He commands all men to repent of their unthankful heart and start thanking God. Can you start today? Can you go home? One of the things I teach people in our churches, at least once a year write a thank you note to your parents, to your husband, to your wife.

The best day to do it is on their birthday. In our family that has become a ritual. Not a ritual, it is a meaningful act that all of us do to on any one of our birthdays.

All the others would write a note. Two lines is enough. Two, three lines.

We want to thank God for you. You can learn something from the Samaritans. We who are great Bible scholars can we humble ourselves and learn something from this ignorant Samaritan? Thank you dear brother for teaching me how to thank Jesus for little things which I took for granted.

Thank you for my family and to express our thanks to one another. John says if you say you love God and you don't love your brother, you are a liar. When you learn to thank God, you will also learn to be thankful to one another.

I teach children in our church just be thankful for your parents. Express it at least once a year. Express it to them.

Parents, tell your children you are thankful for them in spite of all their naughtiness. That you are thankful that God brought them into your family. I say that regularly to my four boys and even to the ones they are married now.

I don't call them daughters-in-law because I am not under the law. I am under grace now. I call them daughters.

I have no daughters-in-law. I have only daughters in grace. I say I thank God for you.

I thank God that God brought you through my son into my family. It brings a bond between me and them. I say I will never treat you like a daughter-in-law.

You are my daughters. Learn to be thankful. It's one mark of a godly man, godly woman.

They are deeply thankful. Do you know what Jesus said? If you give a cup of cold water to one of my disciples, you will not lose your reward. I thought of that.

The day of the reward, the Lord calls up somebody. Do you remember 2000 years ago you gave a glass of cold water to my servant Peter? Glass of cold water? I don't even remember it, Lord. I remember it.

Here is your reward. I learned something from that. That I must never forget the good that other people have done for me.

Sometimes I send a New Year greeting to some people whom I write to only once a year. You know, old contacts. And I say, Brother, I remember 25 years ago when I was in your home.

You were very kind to me. You were very hospitable. I want to thank you.

I want to thank you for the way you helped my son when he came there. You drove him somewhere. I want to thank you for that.

It was more than a cup of water. If Jesus can give thanks for a cup of water, I am not so big that I don't know how to give thanks for things more than a cup of water. Dear brothers and sisters, learn thanksgiving.

Third, praise. Praise is beyond prayer and thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is, God has done something for me or somebody has done something for me and I am saying thank you.

Praise is, God, it doesn't matter even if you didn't do anything for me, you are still almighty. And God is almighty long before He did anything for me, right? He was holy long before He did anything for me. Long before I existed, He was holy.

Full of love and I am praising Him for who He is. In thanksgiving I praise Him for what He has done for me. Thank you is still a bit self-centered.

But praise is totally God-centered. I don't think of what He did for me, I think of who He is. Almighty God who runs the universe.

Jesus Christ, Lord of Lords, who has got all authority in heaven and earth to praise Him for who He is. That's what the angels in heaven do. When Isaiah saw a vision of the seraphim, I am sure God did a lot for those angels but they were not thinking primarily of that.

They say, holy, holy, holy, Lord of Lords, the whole earth is full of His glory. You know, I thought of that verse. Have you ever thought of it? Sometimes we read the Bible too fast and we don't think about these verses.

I have been encouraging people to read the Bible slowly. Sometimes I read a verse and I can't go past that verse in my Bible reading. Have you ever got stuck in a verse in your Bible reading? You plan to finish a chapter and you only read one verse and you can't go beyond that? It happened to me numerous times.

The next morning when I get up, I am still on the same verse. Sometimes I am on the same verse for a whole week. One verse.

Because I am not so interested in going through the Bible as in the Bible going through me. I don't want to get into some Guinness Book of Records, I read the Bible 50 times in a year. No.

I want to say the Bible went through me at least once in my lifetime. Every verse of the Bible. That's what I want.

I once prayed to the Lord saying, Lord, before I leave this earth, I want to claim every promise in the Bible and before I leave this earth, I want to obey every command in the Bible. It's a good prayer to pray. Before I leave this earth, I want to claim every promise that you have given to man.

And before I leave this earth, I want to obey every command you gave to man. I want to live a fulfilled, satisfying life. Other people are out to make money and enjoy the pleasures of the world and go on vacations.

I am more interested in making sure to claim all the promises of Scripture. That's the vacation I want. And to obey all the commands in Scripture.

It made my life extremely happy. Isaiah chapter 6. Holy, Holy, Holy. Verse 3. He is the Lord of Hosts.

The whole earth is full of His glory. Is that true? The whole earth is full of His glory? You really believe that? You say, Lord, these seraphims haven't looked at the earth properly. How can they say the whole earth is full of His glory? They have a prophetic vision.

God, You are in control of everything. The devil does not control even one square inch of this earth. My Father runs the universe.

The whole earth is full of His glory. God is in control of everything. And even the things that look evil, God turns them for good.

I can praise Him for everything. I can praise Him for what looks like evil. What is the most evil thing that ever happened on this earth? Crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Can you think of a worse sin that man committed than crucifying the Son of God? That is the worst thing that ever happened on this earth. Agree with me or not? Okay, now tell me the best thing that ever happened on this earth. The crucifixion of the Son of God, right? Is there anything better than that that happened for us? Can you think of anything better that happened than Calvary's hill where Jesus died on the cross? What did we learn from that, from Calvary's hill? Not only Jesus died for our sins, but that God can take the worst thing the devil does and turn it into the very best thing for us.

That's why we praise Him. Why do you complain about, oh, that fellow did this to me, that fellow did this to me? I remember one brother who came to me like that and said, brother, people are saying this about me and that about me. I said, brother, have they crucified you yet? No, I said, not yet.

You got a long way to go. What are you complaining about these little, little things? I mean, Jesus forgave people even when they killed Him. Are you a disciple of Jesus or what? God is in control of this universe.

We praise Him. In all situations we praise Him. And when we praise Him, the Lord will put our enemies to flight.

You read, I don't have time to show it to you, read 2 Chronicles 20 sometime. 2 Chronicles 20, a great multitude came against King Jehoshaphat and a prophet got up and said, you don't have to fight in this battle, just praise the Lord. Jehoshaphat put in front of the army, not people with bows and arrows, he put in front of the army people who clapped their hands and blew trumpets and said, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, God is on their throat.

And it says, God defeated all those enemies. There is a song we sing in our church, when you pray and cannot get your answer through, it goes on to say, try praising. When you pray and you can't seem to get through, try praising God.

I do that sometimes, you know, I kneel down to pray and my mind wanders here, there and everywhere. I remember all the things I have forgotten to do at that time. In fact, if you want to remember the things you forgot to do, just kneel down to pray.

The devil will remind you of all the things you forgot to do. So, I stop praying. I say, Lord, I can't get through.

I just get up and raise my hand and start praising God and the devil flees, then I can pray. Yeah, praise is a tremendous power. That's why the devil can't stand in heaven, because everybody is praising God there.

And the devil can't stand in any church where they are always praising God. The devil can't stand in any home where we are always thanking and praising God for who He is, Almighty God, who turns the curse into a blessing and turns everything for our good. We have no complaint against anybody.

If you don't got to complain against anybody, in that moment you are saying, the devil rules this universe. At least for these five minutes, the devil rules the universe. And this guy messed up my life.

Sorry. The devil doesn't rule this universe even for one second. He was defeated on the cross.

My Heavenly Father rules the universe. I praise Him for who He is. And finally, worship.

Worship has got nothing to do with words. It's an attitude. We may worship with words.

It may move on to song. But the highest form of worship is silence. Where we bow before God.

Everybody who worshipped in the Bible fell down on their face before God. Abraham, Job, Isaac, Even John the Apostle on the Isle of Patmos. All this business that you see nowadays on television, people falling backwards and showing their feet to God.

It's the opposite of worship. The devil is having a big laugh. Saying, God, look at these fellows.

In the olden days they used to bow down and worship you. Now they are showing you their feet. Aha.

And they think that's the power of the Holy Spirit. It's not. A true worshipper doesn't fall on his back and show his feet to God.

He falls on his face and puts his head down. Do you ever see that happening in all these meetings? No. They are not worshippers.

They are insulters. Insulting God. I know in India, in any village in India, you go and show somebody your feet.

It's one of the biggest insults you can show. Imagine showing God your feet on a platform in front of so many people. The devil has a big laugh at these foolish Christians.

Abraham fell on his face and worshipped God. Job fell on his face and worshipped God. Moses fell on his face and John fell on his face.

Every man of God did that. Throughout the Bible you read it. And when they were falling on their face they were saying, God you are everything to me.

I want to be a nobody. I want you to be everybody in my life. The finest expression of worship that I have discovered in the whole Bible is in Psalm 73 and verse 25 where the psalmist says, a man called Asaf who wrote this psalm Psalm 73, 25 He says, O God, whom have I in heaven but you? And there is no one on earth I desire beside you.

I desire nothing. It's one of the first things, one of the things that the Lord taught me early in my Christian life was not only listening but worshipping. Because Jesus told the devil, you must worship God first and then serve him.

I am very thankful, I discovered that very early in my life that if I wanted to serve God, I would first learn how to be a worshipper. Jesus told the Samaritan woman, the father is seeking all over the world for worshippers. Those who will worship him in the spiritual truth.

And I discovered this is the secret. To say to Jesus, Lord, I desire nothing on earth but you. I don't want, I was a naval officer.

I said, Lord, I don't want promotion in my job. I don't want to make more money. I don't want acceptance before people.

I was single. I don't even want to get married if that's not your will. These things are not important for me.

If I have you, Lord Jesus, that's it. I don't want anything else. Everything else is a bonus God gave.

I don't want a job, I don't want a house, I don't want property, I don't want anything. He gives many things, but if you place value on these things, I'll tell you this, if you place a value on your job, or your house, or your property, or your car, you are not a worshipper. But if you say, Lord Jesus, I desire nothing on earth but you.

You are everything to me. I desire no one on earth but you. Well, He gave me a wife, but because I'm a worshipper of Jesus, my wife and I had a very good relationship.

Because she's not first in my life. She knows that. She knew that 42 years ago, and she knows it today.

And I know that I'm not first in her life either. Jesus is first. And because of that we have had a very happy marriage.

My positions are not first. I don't care if I lose them. Jesus is first.

So I don't get disturbed if somebody steals something of mine, or ruins something. I remember when we used to have meetings in our home. For 6 years the church met in my home.

And the little children used to practice writing the alphabets on our wall. Yes, we have to correct them. But we have to correct them without getting disturbed.

That's different. We have to teach children because they don't know. I used to say, Lord, I thank you that I'm not a worshipper of the wall, I'm a worshipper of Jesus Christ.

So I have nothing on earth to disturb you. We had villagers used to come to our house to come from our village churches, poor people whose children don't wear diapers. They're too poor.

They'd come visiting me and the little small boy would stand up on the coffee table and urinate there. I said, fine. Just take a little cloth and wipe it off.

Clean it up. I said, Lord, I'm not a worshipper of my coffee table either. I'm a worshipper of Jesus Christ.

Nothing on earth will disturb me. I learned the secret 50 years ago. Lord Jesus, I desire nothing on earth but you.

I desire no one on earth but you. And because I learned to worship, I learned to serve. It's not just singing a few songs on Sunday morning and calling it worship.

Many Christians worship something other than Jesus Christ. That's why they get disturbed. Because their idol has been disturbed.

I don't have any idol. Do you have an idol? Are you a worshipper? Can you say like Habakkuk, the last verses of Habakkuk? Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines. The labor of the olive shall fail.

In the fields there is no harvest. And the flock is all dead. Yet I will rejoice in the Lord.

I will join the God of my salvation. I remember sometimes I've traveled in the buses in India. And when I get down from the bus, I find my wallet is missing.

Such a neat job. I didn't even feel it. I felt he deserved it because he did such a good job.

Anyway, I said, Lord, why did you allow this guy to pick my pocket? Maybe to pray for him. Nobody ever prayed for him in his life. Maybe I'm going to pray for him.

And then I would ask myself, I lost my money. Did I lose my joy also? Aha! Then my joy was also in my wallet. I decided I'll never put my joy inside my wallet.

My joy is going to be in my heart. My money is going to be in my wallet. And my money is in the bank and my joy is always in my heart.

And I'm not going to lose my joy if I lose my money. If you lost joy with your money, you better be careful. Your joy was somewhere else, not in your heart, not in the Lord.

Habakkuk said, I will rejoice in the Lord. All these things go. It's a wonderful thing to be a worshipper.

Don't worry, you won't starve. I've never starved. I've been a believer for 50 years.

I've never starved. I've never had to tell any earthly person my need, any time in my life. God's taking care of it all.

My children never starve. We didn't bring them up as millionaires, but we never starve. We have a loving father.

Dear brothers and sisters, be a worshipper. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, it's so easy to understand these things in the head and have no experience of these in our life.

Deliver us from that deception. Bring us into reality. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Video: https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/k_Ed4P09xKU.mp4

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/four-steps-in-fellowship-with-god/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net