

# Young People, Be an Example

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen encourages young people to be examples of Christ through their lives, emphasizing obedience, holiness, and reliance on the Holy Spirit.*

**Duration:** 41:00

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:14, John 8:12, Philippians 3:17, 1 Timothy 4:12, Hebrews 4:15

**Topics:** "Christian Example", "Holy Spirit"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being an example of faith, drawing from 1 Timothy 4:12. It highlights the need for young people to stand out in their faith, not letting age or worldly standards hinder them. The focus is on being a living example of Christ's life, showcasing His compassion, humility, and purity to impact others. The sermon encourages seeking to be filled with the Holy Spirit, allowing God's light to shine through one's life as a beacon of hope and guidance to those around.

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## Transcript

So, my dear young people, I want to speak to you today about the theme of our camp, which is from 1 Timothy 4 and verse 12, with the emphasis on be an example of those who believe. And in those days, when Paul was writing, even in those days, many Christians were a bad example. They believed, they said they accepted Christ, they turned from non-Christian religions, and they accepted Christ, but they were a bad example.

And so, Paul told Timothy, you got to be different. Don't let anybody look down on you just because you're young. You know, in our country, especially, people look up to those who are older, and we think that older people have got more wisdom, and only older people are fit to preach.

That's all nonsense. The person who is fit to preach is not one who is old, or one who has studied the Bible a lot, or got a lot of Bible college degrees, or even one who thinks he's got a lot of supernatural gifts. He's the one who is an example by his life.

That's the only person who is qualified to speak God's Word. And if you are an example as a young man or a young woman, you can share God's Word more powerfully than other people. And so, this should be your challenge in your life.

And this is what you should pray for, Lord, I want to be an example in my life. I want to be a good example. Even if I am not able to speak, our life can speak more than our words.

What is it that impresses you about Jesus? It's not just his preaching. It's the way he lived, his attitude to sinful people, his compassion for those who had failed. It's the life of Jesus that speaks to us.

Today, unfortunately, the emphasis is on preaching. We admire those who can preach well. But when Jesus said, you are the light of the world, what did he mean? Is the light sermons? No.

If you turned with me to John chapter 1 and verse 4, in John chapter 1 and verse 4, it says about Jesus Christ, in him was life, and that life was the light of men. So even in Christ, it was not his words. It was his life that was the light of men.

Before Jesus Christ came to earth, in Old Testament times, there was nobody about whom it could be said his life was a light. The only light that people had in the Old Testament was God's word. And before God's word was given, no, there was no light in the world at all.

And most of the Bible began only about a little less than 1,500 years before Christ when Moses wrote the book of Genesis. That's with the nation of Israel about 1,450 years before Christ. That's when God gave his word.

And like it says in Psalm 119, Psalm 119 and verse 105, it says, thy word, O Lord, is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. So God's word was the light. So if anybody wanted light in the Old Testament about God, they had to go to the word and see from God's word.

But those are only words, written letters and words. There was no example throughout history until Jesus Christ came. There was no one who could say, my life is the light.

It was only God's word, not Moses, not Elijah, not even John the Baptist. John the Baptist, Jesus said, was the greatest prophet that ever lived on earth. In fact, he said he was the greatest human being.

But it says about John the Baptist in John 1, verse 8, John the Baptist was not the light. The greatest man that was ever born right from Adam to Christ, John the Baptist, it's written about him in John 1, verse 8, he was not the light. Even his life was not the light.

But when Jesus came, he could say, I am the light of the world. What was that? Not his words, but his life. So it's very important for you young people to understand that, because we live in a world where only those who can speak well in Christianity in the church are appreciated, or those who can sing well or preach well.

Who are the people most appreciated in Christendom today? Those who can preach well, those who can sing well, and those who claim to have healing gifts. By the way, most of them don't have any healing gifts. They're just fooling people.

But they claim to have healing gifts, and so they're admired a lot. But it's not the miracles of Jesus that was the light. It was not even the words.

It was his life. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. Now I'll tell you how that should encourage you.

Because many of you, most of you sitting here will never preach, or you don't have any great gift of singing. So you can't really compete in a world where everybody wants to be a great preacher. But what about this light that Jesus spoke about? Is there any of you sitting here who can say, I can't be a light? Because it's a matter of life.

Even a young girl who may never preach in her whole life can be a light. And that is possible only if we open our being completely to the life of Jesus. In John 8, verse 12, you know the well-known words, I am the light of the world.

He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. So there we see, because Jesus was a light, his life was a light, we could follow him. In the Old Testament, they had to study the word, and you know how it is when people study the Bible.

Look at all the denominations in Christianity, right from the Roman Catholics all the way to the other extreme of Pentecostals, and all the other denominations in between. They all hold the same Bible, but they preach different things. How is it they preach different things from the same Bible? Because one group says, no, this is the meaning of this verse.

Another group says, no, that is the meaning of this verse. And a third group says, no, that's not, both of you are wrong. This is the meaning of that verse.

When you come to written words, there's always a lot of argument. Which is the interpretation, this or that or the other? And that was true even in the Old Testament. There were different people.

The Pharisees had one interpretation. The Sadducees had another interpretation. Different groups had different interpretations of the same Old Testament Bible.

But when it comes to life, the love of God manifested in Jesus Christ, there it's not a question of interpretation. So when it comes to life, there is no argument. And life is what we must pursue.

He who follows me, not who follows a written word, but who follows me, my example. Jesus came to earth to be an example, not just when he was 30 years old, but even as a young man and even as a little child. You know, we can tell little children, follow the example of Jesus.

So a little child who is taught by his parents to follow the example of Jesus, you know how Jesus obeyed his earthly parents, Joseph and Mary, faithfully, whatever they said, that is an example for little children. And for young people like you to honor your father and mother like Jesus did in his earthly life and to overcome temptation like Jesus did in his earthly life. Remember at the end of 30 years when Jesus was baptized in water and when he came out of the water, there was this voice from heaven that said, this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased.

So from there we can learn something. How can we please God, our heavenly father? Is it by doing miracles? No, because up to the age of 30, Jesus never did any miracles. But the father said, I'm still well pleased.

Was it by preaching sermons? No, because Jesus never preached any sermons up to the age of 30. I don't know whether Jesus could sing well, but that was not the point. It was not how well a person sings or how well a person preaches or what miracles, because these were not the things that the father looked at in Jesus' life for 30 years.

You need to ask yourself, what was it in Jesus' life that the father was so happy with that he could say from heaven, I watched you every second for 30 years and I'm delighted in you. I'm well pleased with you. I'll tell you honestly, my own desire is that when I see God, he'll be able to say about me, I'm very happy with the way you lived on earth.

It doesn't matter. I'm not worried about whether my sermons were perfect or everything else. There may have been so many mistakes.

Maybe I could have preached better. That's not the thing that disturbs me, whether I could sing well or even pray well. These are not the things.

But if God can say to me at the end of my life, I'm very happy with the way you lived on earth, your devotion to me and the way you treated other people, the way you lived with other human beings and with my children, I'm very happy with you. If God would say that to me, I tell you, there'll be no greater joy for me. It's not the number of souls I brought to Christ or, because those things are a matter of gift.

You know, sometimes we admire a person for gift, but gift is not something that's related to character because Jesus said there are people who can do miracles in his name, which is gift, and still go to hell because their life did not please God. If you don't know that verse, you must know it. It's written in Matthew chapter seven.

The reason I say that is many of you young people can long for gifts. Almost every young person, particularly from Pentecostal churches, when they seek for a gift from God, you know what they seek for? The gift of healing. Why? Because that'll make them famous.

They'll get honor. Of course, they don't get it, but they're seeking for that. Because they think, oh, then I'll become a famous person.

There's so many people who seek for that because they're seeking for honor. There are very few people who are seeking to live like Jesus and help people in a hidden way and not be bothered whether they get any honor or not. So here we read in Matthew chapter seven that in the last day, it's not going to be one or two.

It says in verse 22, many, many people are going to come up to Jesus and say, Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name? That means we preached tremendous sermons. That's the meaning of prophecy. Prophetic sermons, not just teaching.

We preached mighty prophetic sermons that moved people in the name of Jesus. And we cast out demons. Imagine if you saw a man casting out demons, you really admire him.

And we perform many miracles, not one or two, many miracles in your name. Now you know what the father said to Jesus, I'm well pleased with you. What does God say to these people who've done all these fantastic things? He says, go away from me.

Depart from me. I don't want you anywhere near me. I want you to get away from me and go far away from me.

Go to hell. Why? They can say, Lord, look at the number of people we brought to you and the people we influenced by our sermons. No, I'm not impressed by gifts.

There was sin in your life. And there you see what is the thing that God really looks for in you young people. It is not.

Don't look for gifts like casting out demons and prophesying and doing miracles. Look to be free from sin. That's the thing that pleased Jesus, that pleased the father about Jesus.

What did he do in those 30 years? There are two things which you must remember, which are a good example for you as young people. See, most, if not all of you are under the age of 30. And what did Jesus do during those 30 years? That's a good example for you who are teenagers and young people in your 20s to look at, see what did Jesus do when he was a teenager or a young person of my age? One thing is written in Luke chapter 2, that verse 51, he continued in the last part of that verse in subjection to Joseph and Mary in the middle of that verse.

So that's one thing. He was in subjection to Joseph and Mary throughout those 30 years. That's the first thing.

God tested Jesus in his home. That's why he said, I'm well pleased with you. And most of you are living in your home.

And that's where God is seeing whether you obey the only one commandment that he has given to children. Honor your father and mother. Children obey your parents.

You see, that's difficult. It was difficult for Jesus. It was more difficult for Jesus.

And I'll tell you why. Because you are imperfect. And your parents are also imperfect.

But in Jesus case, he was perfect. And his parents were imperfect. So it is much more difficult for a perfect person to obey imperfect people.

But he did it. He did it because God had said it. The question is not whether your dad is perfect or your mom is perfect.

No. The question is, has God said it? Then you do it. And I'll tell you something.

In those little, little situations in your home, God is testing you for a higher ministry in the days to come. Because the promise there is children obey your parents, honor your father and mother, that it'll go well with you. And that you'll live long on the earth.

So God's will is that it should go well with us. And that he can give us approval over our life. And then you can be an example to other people about how a young person can obey even imperfect parents.

The only place where you are permitted to disobey your parents is if they tell you to do something against the word of God. Maybe if your parents ask you to bow down to idols. Because they worship idols perhaps.

Then you have to say respectfully. I'm sorry dad, mom. I love you very much.

I respect you very much. But my faith in God prevents me from obeying you in that matter. I don't mind doing anything you tell me to do.

But God is above all of us. And he has told us we must never worship idols. Or if your parents ask you to tell a lie in some situation.

Just say respectfully, dad. Please don't ask me to do that. They may tell you when you go to school, tell a lie.

And you say no. They may say you'll be punished if you tell the truth. I'm willing to face the punishment by speaking the truth.

I tell you, God will honor you. My question is, do you want the approval of your teacher? Or do you want the approval of God? You know, it's better to fail in an examination without cheating than to pass in an examination with cheating. I mean, you may pass by cheating.

And get through to the next class or get a job or get a promotion. But God will be unhappy with you. And you'll have that problem, that thing convicting you in your conscience all your life.

But if in that time in the examination you're tempted to cheat. And say no, I want to be an example. Do you think Jesus would... And Jesus also went to school.

They had schools those days. Because they had their education in schools. And that's where Jesus learned to read and write.

Do you think Jesus ever cheated in a school, in an examination? If he didn't know the answer, he wouldn't look at somebody else's answer and write down no. So even in school, you can say... When you're in a difficult situation, ask yourself, what would Jesus do here? There you have an example. And if you stand up like that for Jesus, you will become an example to other people.

See, this is God's method. That Jesus is the first person right in front as the leader, as the main example. And then behind him, there are so many people running after studying the Bible and preaching and so many other things.

But there are a few who are looking at Jesus' life and following his example. And you must be one of them. Looking at Jesus' life and always in every situation asking yourself, What would Jesus do in this situation? I know many times in my young or late days when I was tempted severely in different areas, I would ask myself, Lord, what would you do? What did you do when you were tempted just like I'm being tempted now? Maybe I'm 25 years old.

I'm being tempted by something very strongly. And I think, what did Jesus do when he was in Nazareth? I want to do the same thing. I want to do the same thing that Jesus did.

Because the Bible says that he was tempted like us. You see, that's the second thing that he did in 30 years. One was obey his parents.

And the other we read in Hebrews 4 and verse 15. Hebrews 4 and verse 15. It says there, we have a high priest who can sympathize with our weakness.

What is our weakness? Our weakness is that we have a flesh in which dwells nothing good. We're tempted, tempted, tempted. And we are so weak that we have fallen, fallen, fallen thousands of times in our life already.

Even by the time we become teenagers, we have fallen thousands of times. Which shows we are weak. You know, supposing you can just touch a man and he falls down.

You have to say he's weak. Most of us won't fall down if somebody just touches us. But imagine a man is so weak that if you just touch him he falls down.

That's what happens to us in temptation. Some small temptation comes and touches us and we have fallen. Doesn't that show we are weak? Very weak.

Some small little temptation and we tell a lie. Or we get angry. Or we lust with our eyes.

Or we are jealous of somebody. And what is it? Just a very small thing. Or we get offended with something somebody said.

Small thing and we are knocked down. Maybe as young people, older people correct you. Small little thing, absolutely, maybe half a sentence.

Maybe your dad or somebody or an elder brother in the church said something. And you fall down, offended. You see how weak you are.

Jesus can sympathize with your weakness. And he came to earth in a flesh which was just like that, easily tempted. He can sympathize with our weakness.

And he did not sin because inside his body he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Right from birth. And so he would use that power to resist temptation.

And temptation could never make him fall. You see, God has made us weak so that we depend on the Holy Spirit. If you read in the Old Testament, God made Israel a very weak nation.

There were so many powerful enemies. You read about many, many stories of these powerful armies that would come to fight against Israel. Why did God make his people weak? There's a reason.

He wanted them to depend on him. If God's people were strong, they wouldn't depend on him. That's the reason why he makes us weak.

So all of us are weak. Some people recognize their weakness. The others don't recognize their weakness.

But we're all weak. And the wonderful thing is that Jesus can sympathize with our weakness because he was tempted like us. Isn't that a great word? He was tempted in all things just like we are.

But he did not sin. That's a tremendous message. I found it has given me a great comfort in my life to know that in everything in my life that I face, any type of situation, I can look at Jesus as my example and say, Lord, you were also tempted just like me.

And you did not sin. So I believe I have the hope that if I open my whole being, surrender every part of my inner being to be filled with the Holy Spirit, I can follow you. But, you know, because we have all sinned so much in our past, that has become a habit with us.

And so that is why we find it so difficult to overcome. But if you fight that and say, Lord, give me the power of your Holy Spirit, little by little by little by little, you will overcome. You know, you think of the old days when you first went to school and something was very difficult for you.

Maybe even addition was very difficult for you when you were in the kindergarten. Or subtraction or division or long division. And like that in different classes, some subject was very difficult for you.

But after one or two years, it became very easy for you. And today you can do mathematics in your mind. You can calculate in your mind, see how easy it has become.

What once upon a time, even with a paper, you could not calculate so easily. Because you practiced and practiced and practiced and practiced. And now it has become so easy for you that you can do it without a paper or pencil.

You can do calculation in your mind. It's exactly like that. With temptation, if you keep on fighting against it, fighting against it, you'll be an overcomer.

And what looks so difficult for you now will become easy for you. You must believe that. And the example is Jesus, who was tempted like us in every single point.

You tell me whatever temptation you face, according to this word, Jesus faced it. And not only faced it, he faced it in exactly the same way you're facing it. Not the same circumstances.

Jesus didn't have a drunken father or an idol-worshiping father or mother. He didn't have the circumstances. He didn't have people, you know, violating traffic rules when he was riding the scooter on the road.

He never rode scooters. But they're not the same circumstances, but the same temptation. And that is how he has become an example for us.

He faced those temptations and he could say, I'm the light of the world. Follow me. But he also said something else in John chapter 9 and verse 5. In John 9 verse 5, he said, as long as I'm in the world, I'm the light of the world.

That means I'm not going to be the light of the world forever. As long as I am in the world, I'm the light of the world. That's what many Christians haven't understood.

Now Jesus has gone up. He's not in the world. He's in heaven.

He's in the right hand of the father. So who's the light of the world now? That's an important question. Jesus said, as long as I'm living in the world, 33 and a half years, I am the light of the world.

Now, according to Matthew 5 and verse 14, Jesus told his disciples, you are the light of the world. So like in a relay race, you know, in the Olympics and other games, they have a relay race. The first person runs 100 meters and gives that stick, that baton to the next person.

And then his part is over. The next person has taken and he's got to run the next 100 meters. So Jesus has run his race and say, I'm the light of the world.

And now I'm going and he's given the baton to us now. And we've got to take it and run our racing. I am the light of the world now.

You know, that's a tremendous thing to be able to say, I'm the light of the world. See, how can you say that? Matthew 5, 14. That's not pride.

That's just saying what Jesus told me to say. If Jesus tells you you're the light of the world, then what are you? That's not pride. Supposing I say I'm a child of God.

Is that pride? Some people who don't understand how to become children of God will say, oh, you're proud saying you're a child of God. I'm not proud. I was a sinner, but Jesus forgave my sins and made me a child of God.

So if you're not if you understand that it's not being proud to say I'm a child of God, it's not being proud to say I'm the light of the world. Because the same Jesus who made me a child of God says to me, I'm the light of the world. OK, I am.

And then I suddenly realize, hey. I've got to live as the light of the world. I've got to be an example to other people, just like Jesus was an example for me.

That is our calling. And remember what I said at the beginning, that light is not preaching. It's life.

It's the life of Jesus. And every meeting we go to, every message we hear, every youth camp we go to must be to help us to have more of this life of Jesus. That is the reason why we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

You know, in the Old Testament and, you know, right up until about 200 years ago, there was no electricity in the world. Electricity is only a little more than 100 years old. So all light before that, for thousands of years, how did man have light? With a fire.

You either burn wood or then gradually they would have lamps. And in the lamps they would put oil. And, you know, if you have an oil lamp at home, you have to keep on filling oil.

Otherwise, after some time, the lamp will die out. So when Jesus spoke about light, everybody thought of an oil lamp. They didn't think of electric bulbs like we think of today.

Everybody had oil lamps. You know, Jesus spoke about the virgins who carried oil lamps. Light meant an oil lamp.

So when Jesus said, you're the light of the world in the mind of everybody, it was an oil lamp. And then they knew the only way the light will burn is if that lamp is full of oil and is to be keep on being filled with oil. So what shall I say to you, young people? You must seek with all your heart to keep your vessel full of oil, to be always filled with the Holy Spirit.

In the Old Testament, the oil was a picture of the Holy Spirit. In the tabernacle, they had a lamp stand inside the tent. And the priests had to make sure every day that the lamp was to be burning all the time.

And the oil had to be poured in every day in the Old Testament. That's a picture of how we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit all the time. That's the only way this light can burn and this life of Jesus can come forth from us so that we can turn around to those who are younger than us and say, follow me.

You know, Jesus was the first person on this earth who could say, follow me. More than saying, believe in me, he would say, follow me, follow me, follow me, follow me. And then we see another person who said that, and that was the Apostle Paul.

He said in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Corinthians 11 and verse 1, be followers of me as I am of Christ. In other words, I'm following somebody else, Jesus, in front of me. You please come behind me and follow me and we will both follow Christ.

And he also said this in Philippians 3, again in verse 17. Brethren, join in following my example. Paul says, I'm an example, follow me.

And not only me, you can also look at others like me who are walking according to the same pattern. The life of Jesus is their example. So I've sought to make that a goal in my life.

All of us have got people younger than us spiritually. Even if you're only 15 years old, there are people younger than you in your church. There may be people younger than you in your home, your younger brother, your younger sister, and they're looking up to you to be an example.

For example, if you dress very immodestly as a girl, you're going to be a bad example to the other young girls. And they're going to follow your example. And if you go astray, they go astray too.

You know, Jesus spoke about how a blind man follows another blind person and they both fall into a ditch. So if you're a bad example, you're not only affecting yourself, you're affecting other people who look at you and follow you. In the same way, if you're a good example, you can have other people following you and you can lead them in the right direction.

So this business of being an example is very, very important. And be an example in your speech, be an example in the pure way in which you live, be an example in school and in college. You know how so much of evil now there is in schools and colleges and even in the place of work.

There's so much of sin, people cracking dirty jokes, speaking evil things and doing so many things, passing around books that are dirty. And in the midst of all this, the Lord has placed you as his representative. It's like you can say that today's colleges and places of work are like dark rooms full of darkness.

Sin means darkness. And you go there with a torchlight or a lamp. You're the light.

Don't let other people blow out that light by their life. You know, one candle can light how many candles? A hundred? Five hundred? There's no limit to the number of candles that one candle can light. But if all the other candles in your college or office are all without light, that's how it's a dark room because they've got candles, but none of them are burning.

And God has placed you there to demonstrate by your life something different. And now you must pray, Lord, please lead me to somebody whose candle I can light with my candle. Lord, please help me.

Fill me with the Holy Spirit. You may never be a preacher in your life. You may not be great at singing.

You may be very poor, but you can be filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter, James, and John came from very poor families, but they were filled with the Holy Spirit. And look at the influence they have.

For 2,000 years, they have blessed the whole world. And you can bless other people if you're filled with the Holy Spirit. That's why you need to seek God.

Say, Lord, I want my vessel always to be full of oil. Otherwise, I'll never be an example. I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit continuously.

That must be your prayer. It's the wonderful privilege that we have in the New Testament, which they never had in the Old Testament. As I said, in the Old Testament, they only had the Bible.

They could read this, and that was the light. But now we have the Holy Spirit producing in us the life of Jesus, the life of humility. And that's why we need to look at the life of Jesus in the Bible.

It must be your great passion to study the life of Jesus in the Bible. How he lived his humility, his purity, his love for people, his compassion for those who were looked down upon by all the others in society. If he went to school, I think Jesus would look for those who are weak and poor and try to encourage them.

And we are living in a country where there are so many people who are suffering. There are so many people who go through so many trials, and many are poor, and many are struggling without jobs. And think that you can be an example to all of them.

For example, in the matter of praying to God when you have a problem. We must develop the habit of praying to God whenever you have a problem. Lord, please help me in this situation.

You don't have a job, maybe you're praying concerning marriage, in any area. To be an example, and so that one day you can tell other people, hey, I had the same problem you had. I prayed, and Jesus helped me.

That's a great testimony. See, I can give that testimony after being a believer for 52 years. I faced so many problems in my life in these 52 years.

And I would take them to the Lord in prayer. I can tell you, he's delivered me from all those problems. Even physical sicknesses.

I take it to God in prayer, and say, Lord, I want you to solve this. So I can now tell other people, hey, God answers prayer, you know. I don't care what your problem is.

I mean, if God could solve all my problems in 52 years, why can't he do yours? But you won't be able to say that if you haven't prayed to God in the middle of your problem. When you have a problem, you complain and grumble and say, oh God, why did you do this for me? No, that was a challenge. You know, when there was a storm in the lake, that was a challenge.

Go to Jesus, and Jesus stops the storm. So if you find a difficulty in your life, that's a challenge for you to pray. And see how God answers that prayer.

And then you can be an example to others, because you can tell others. My Jesus answers prayer. So remember every situation, God allows to train you to be an example.

Maybe you come from a very poor home. You don't have all the riches that other people have. Okay, most people in our country are poor.

You can be an example to them better than those believers who come from rich homes. Because when somebody looks at those rich believers, they'll say, ah, you've got plenty of money, you can easily talk. But when they look at you, you're so poor.

And they see you're so happy, living in a small little house, you're so happy. What an example that can be. That's why God has got his witnesses at all levels.

Rich people, poor people, middle class, all levels, God wants witnesses. Clever people, uneducated people, Paul was very clever, Peter was not so much. God wants a witness at all levels.

So I pray that all of you will seek to be an example in your life. And as I said, seek God with all your heart. If you're not sure that you've been filled with the Holy Spirit, make that a prayer from today onwards.

And say, Lord, I will never be satisfied till you have given me an assurance that you have filled me with your Holy Spirit. Let God give you an assurance. And say, Lord, help me to be an example to other young people who are younger than me.

God bless you all. Amen.

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