

# Christian Literature and Living

“Was Blind, But Now I See!”

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**Zac Poonen**

**A Leading Evangelist from India**

**Shanthi Nehemiah, M.A., M.Phil.**

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**Zac Poonen**

<http://www.precious-testimonies.com>

Zac Poonen is adored for his unique approach to the Gospel. Brother Zac Poonen was formerly an Indian Naval Officer who has been serving the Lord in India for the past 40 years as a Bible-teacher and elder having responsibility for a number of churches. He resigned his Naval commission, while still young, in 1966, to serve the Lord full-time. He has been involved in church-planting ministry in India for over 25 years and has spiritual oversight over about 40 churches now. He travels frequently, ministering at deeper-life conferences in Asia, America, Europe and Australia. His wife, Annie, is a medical doctor who travels with him in India, rendering free medical assistance to poor people in the villages. She has also written three books for young girls and mothers.

### **The Small Beginning**

The Christian Fellowship Church (CFC) commenced with a few families that first met together in Bangalore, India in August 1975. They decided to be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ first themselves, and then to make disciples in obedience to the Lord's commission in Matthew 28: 18 – 20 emphasizing the new birth, holiness of inner life, mutual love, moral purity, financial integrity, founding every aspect of their lives on God's Word alone and sharing God's truth with others.

### **Other Ministries**

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Zac Poonen – A Leading Evangelist from India

Bro. Zac has written a number of books and articles in English. His messages given in India and abroad are available on audio and video cassettes and CD's. He has written 25 books - mostly on the deeper Christian life. Many of these have been translated into a number of languages and have been circulated widely around the world. He has had a weekly Bible-teaching program over radio, for most of the last 30 years, beamed across South East Asia through the Far East Broadcasting Associates Radio station in Seychelles. Over 100,000 audio-tapes of his messages on the deeper Christian life have been circulated in many countries around the world. He has produced an audio CD (in MP3 format) that contains 70 hours of teaching (on a single CD), that cover every book of the Bible and bring out the distinctive message of each book.

### **The Special Features of the Ministry of Bro. Zac Poonen**

John Wesley used to tell his co-workers, "Let it never be said that you have become rich by preaching the gospel." So much is Bro. Zac Poonen, for he says, "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." Zac Poonen supports himself and his family through "tent-making" and does not receive any salary for his services. He does not receive any royalty for any of his books, audio tapes, video tapes or CDs, published by Christian Fellowship Church. The church is led by a plurality of elders. No elder is paid for his work. This is not because they feel that it is unscriptural but because of their desire to stand apart from the bad testimony that many Christian workers have had in the matter of finances.

An elder (who is a spiritual father) will be delighted when he sees that believers, who came as raw material to his church once, have now become men of God. This is something akin to the delight a sculptor has when he has fashioned a shapeless rock into a human form. He had to chip away at that block for many months and years before the face and figure of the man came out of it! That is the work that Zac Poonen has been doing since he took up this mighty mission. He is not satisfied with merely having instructed people correctly. He strives for the image of Christ to come forth in people's lives. His messages changes one from an insecure, depressed believer to one who has become totally secure in God and is full of the joy of the Lord - always.

### **He Practices What he Preaches**

Bro. Zac Poonen in a meeting said, "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. (A message given to evangelical Christian leaders at the All-India Conference on "The church's mission and leadership training" - December 17, 1997.)

### **His Attitude to the Lost Sheep**

“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.”

Zac Poonen has made this his principle that - to be made like them (people) in all things, "to sit where they sit", as Ezekiel said (Ezek.3:15). That means that Zac Poonen doesn't want to exalt himself above others in any way. You will overawe them with your greatness, instead of being one like them.

### **The Spectacular Way of Reaching the Public**

According to 1 Tim.4:16, the command in the Scriptures is to pay close attention to ourselves and to our teaching. This way we can ensure salvation for ourselves and for those we preach to. Brother Zac Poonen's both writings and teachings are flooded with examples. The audience of Brother Zac Poonen is a mixture of literates and illiterates. To reach the commoners, he descends himself to their level. He reaches every soul who reads or hears his message with an extraordinary simplicity and clarity. Through the mastery use of ordinary examples he reveals the deeper, spiritual truth. The examples employed by him cannot be forgotten so easily, moreover it helps in keeping the message conveyed very fresh.

### **Some Samples of Zac's Apt, Ordinary Examples**

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.

### **Role of Evangelism**

Evangelism is always the first ministry in this task. 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! ...

### **Complementing Each Other**

... 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! (A message given to evangelical Christian leaders at the All-India Conference on "The church's mission and leadership training" - December 17, 1997)

### **Difference Between Profession and Calling**

There is a lot of difference between "a profession" and "a calling". Let me explain what I mean. Suppose there's a sick child in a hospital and a nurse looks after it for 8 hours on her shift-duty. That nurse then goes home and forgets all about that child. Her concern for that child was only for 8 hours. Now she has other things to do, such as going to the movies and watching television. She doesn't have to think about that child again until the next day when she goes back to work. But the mother of that child doesn't work 8-hour shifts! She can't go to the movies when her child is sick. That's the difference between a profession and a calling.

### **Caring for Others**

If you apply that illustration to the way you care for the believers in your church, you'll discover whether you're a nurse or a mother! ( From *The Spiritual Leader*)

Let me use an illustration to make the difference clear.

Let us say that the road outside my house is being repaired, and that a deep pit has been dug there. I warn my little boy, saying, "Don't go near that pit, for you might fall into it." But let us say that he disobeys my command and goes near the pit to have a look inside. And he slips and falls inside. From inside that 10-foot pit, he then cries out, calling me.

When I come there, he tells me that he is truly sorry for disobeying my command, and asks me to forgive him. Supposing I then say to him, "All right son, I forgive

you. Good Bye!", what would I have done. I would have forgiven him. But I would not have saved him.

### **What Does Salvation Involve?**

Salvation would involve more than forgiveness. It would involve my pulling him out of the pit that he has fallen into. This is what Jesus has come to do for us too. It is not enough that He forgives us our sins. He has come to save us from our sins too. We have all fallen deeply into the pit of sin, by disobeying our conscience again and again. Now if God were to forgive us, that by itself would be wonderful news. But the good news of Christ is that He will not only forgive us, but save us from the power of sin as well. (From *The Real Truth*).

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Shanthy Nehemiah, M.A., M.Phil.  
Department of English  
Karunya University  
Karunya Nagar  
Coimbatore 641 114  
Tamilnadu, India  
[sahayarani13@gmail.com](mailto:sahayarani13@gmail.com)