

**Articles and Sermons :: Christ Loved the Church and Gave HIMSELF for Her by Zac Poonen**

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Christ loved the church and gave HIMSELF for her (Eph. 5:25). To build the church, we have to love the church in the same way. It is not enough to give our money or our time. We have to give OURSELVES - our Self- life.

When God wanted to describe His love to man, He could compare His love with only one earthly example - the love of a mother for her newly-born child (See Isaiah 49:15). If you observe a mother, you will see that her love for her baby is full of the spirit of sacrifice. From early morning to late at night and right through the night, a mother sacrifices and sacrifices for her baby. And she gets nothing in return. She endures pain and inconvenience, year after year for her child, joyfully, expecting nothing in return. That is how God loves us too. And that is the nature He wants to impart to us. But it is impossible to find a fellowship anywhere in the world about which it can be honestly said that they all love one another like that.

Most believers know only how to love those who agree with them and who join their group. Their love is human and is far removed from the sacrificial love of mothers!! Yet Divine love is the goal towards which we should be striving. A mother does not care whether others around her are sacrificing anything for her child or not. She joyfully sacrifices everything herself. In the same way, one who has seen the church as his own baby will not be bothered whether others around him are sacrificing anything for the church or not. He will sacrifice himself joyfully, and he will have NO complaint or demand against anyone else.

Those who complain that others are not sacrificing for the sake of the church are not mothers but hired nurses. Such nurses have fixed working hours and will complain when the nurse for the next 8-hour shift does not come on time. But a mother does not work 8-hour shifts each day. She works a 24-hour shift daily - year after year - and she does not even get paid for it. Even when her child is 20 years old, the mother's work is not over!!

Only mothers can have milk for their babies every day. Nurses cannot produce milk for the babies they care for. In the same way, those who are like mothers in the church will always have a word for their spiritual children - in every meeting. Many elders have no word for the church because they are nurses, not mothers.

A mother does not expect any payment from her children. No child ever pays its mother for her service. In fact, if you were to calculate the wages a mother should be paid, at the rate of Rs.200 per hour (as paid to nurses), you will find that every child owes its mother more than 30 million rupees, by the time it is 20 years old!! Which child can ever repay such an amount to its mother?

Now the question that comes to us is: Who is willing to work like that for the Lord and for His church - without receiving any payment, but giving oneself, day after day, year after year, until Jesus comes?

If God can find just one person with that spirit anywhere, He will use him to build the church, much more than He can use 10,000 half-hearted believers who try to serve Him without the spirit of sacrifice.