

# Qualities That Measure Spiritual Maturity - Part 5 - Forgiveness and Contentment

by Phil Beach Jr.

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*This sermon emphasizes the essential qualities of forgiveness and contentment as measures of spiritual maturity in a believer's life.*

**Duration:** 1:00:35

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:12, Matthew 6:24, Mark 11:25, Luke 17:3-4, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13, 1 Thessalonians 2:7, 1 Timothy 6:6-8, Hebrews 13:5

**Topics:** "Forgiveness", "Contentment"

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## Description

Phil Beach Jr. emphasizes the qualities of forgiveness and contentment as essential measures of spiritual maturity. He explains that true maturity involves a willingness to forgive others without exceptions, reflecting the forgiveness we receive from God. Additionally, he highlights the importance of being content with what we have, warning against the dangers of covetousness and the pursuit of material wealth. Beach encourages believers to seek a deeper relationship with Christ, which fosters these qualities and leads to true spiritual growth. He concludes by inviting the congregation to reflect on their own lives and seek God's guidance in these areas.

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## Transcript

Thank the Lord for his presence and his goodness this morning. Let's bow our hearts in prayer as we just look to him this morning to speak to us by his Holy Spirit and through the good, incorruptible Word of God. Father, we thank you and praise you for your faithfulness this morning.

We thank you, Lord, for a sense of knowing that you are in our midst and that you desire to reveal to us the beauties of your Son, the splendor of your Son. And in revealing that to us, Lord, you desire to transform us and change us from earthly to heavenly, from carnal to spiritual. Lord, we look to you to prepare our hearts and to give us a meek spirit that we might receive your Word.

And now, Lord, we commit this next few moments into your hands. Speak to us, Lord. Give us ears to hear and hearts ready to obey through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen and Amen. You remember that last week we talked about three elements of maturity, spiritual maturity. We spoke about brokenness, the state whereby God secures in us a hard attitude, where we're

utterly dependent upon Him.

Jesus said, "...as the branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine, so likewise..." He said, "...unless you abide in Me, you can do nothing." And brokenness is that quality that God alone can work in us that enables us to recognize our utter dependence upon Him. It's not the destruction of who we are. It's the breaking of who we are so that we're pliable in His hands, so that He can shine through us.

He can shine through our personality. He can shine through who we are. Very, very important quality.

Then we saw another quality of spiritual maturity is the capacity to redeem the time, recognizing that if we allow the culture that we live in and the standards that govern the culture to determine what we do and when we do it and how we do it, then we're going to miss God's thought on how to be a wise sort of the time that we have. Redeeming the time, the word actually means to buy it back. The word redeem means to buy back.

So we have to buy back the time that we have and give it to God and use it for God. I heard a lot of comments last week on this particular aspect of maturity. A lot of people spoke to me indicating that they realized that their time is not really under the government of the Lord, but so often our time gets away from us and we're spending so much time doing so many things that we really neglect the things that are important.

And so we found that to be very applicable. The third element of spiritual maturity is character qualities, or that is, possessing the qualities, the character qualities that are inherent in spiritual maturity. That's what we're going to look at this morning.

In 1 Corinthians 13, is this working or is it going off and on? Hello? Testing, one, two, three, testing. I'm sorry, please bear with us for a few moments because this... Okay, it's working in the tape, so we'll just work with this here. Again, I apologize for the problems with the system.

And if it does fade out and you're not hearing me and I start talking too low, then just lift your voice up. But most people tell me that doesn't normally happen where I talk too low. Okay, in 1 Corinthians 13, we discovered in verse 11 the transition from immaturity to maturity.

1 Corinthians 13, beginning in verse 11. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. So there's three different aspects of our humanity.

Three different aspects of how we function and how we express ourselves. Speaking, understanding, and thinking. But when I became a man, I put away childish things.

And so the process of spiritual maturity is a process that God works in us whereby we are enabled to put away childish things. And the childish things that we put away are the things that we say, I spoke as a child, the things we understand, I understood as a child, and the things I thought, the things we think, the things we understand, and the things we say. There is a radical change that takes place in your life and my life when God begins the process of spiritual maturity.

It will affect our speech and our thoughts and the way we think about things. And that's the difficulty there. Because we're going to have to be willing to let go of the way we used to talk, the way we used to think, the way we used to understand, and we're going to have to let the Lord work in us a mature expression in those areas of our life.

Have you thought about how you talk? What you say? How you think about things? How you understand certain issues? Let me tell you the most radical and difficult transition that you and I go through when God begins to speak into our life and say it's time for spiritual maturity and that is this. You are not going to solely be interested in you. The great transition from immaturity to maturity is it is no longer you alone who is in the equation.

It's not how things affect you anymore. It's not how you feel. It's not your opinion.

You begin to realize that maturity is concerned about the other person. Might I say that most all of our difficulties in getting along with each other, whether it's in our families and our children and husband and wives or whether it's as a body, a local body, is that we oftentimes are too concerned about how to please ourself and how to do what we want to do that we don't consider the other person. And immaturity, frankly, the very nature of immaturity is I don't care how the other person feels.

My chief interest is me. Dreadful condition, isn't it? Now think. Think about some areas of conflict possibly right now in your relationships.

Either it's husband, wife, children, at work, whatever. Can you see the possibility that in some of those conflicts the root of that conflict is stemming out of an unwillingness on your part to consider the other person and to possibly even let go of what you want to do. Are we ready for spiritual maturity? Are we ready for Father's hand of discipline in our life? In 1 Thessalonians, we're going to look at a statement that Paul, the apostle, makes.

I want to show you the incredible measure of spiritual maturity that was in this man's life. I'm trusting you'll be able to hear what the Word is saying now. It's found in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. I'm not going to tell you the spot yet.

I want to just give you a little introduction. We're talking about a man here who was walking on the road to Emmaus when the Lord Jesus appeared to him, knocked him down, blinded him, called him, commissioned him, anointed him, and totally changed his life. We're talking about a man that was given authority by God to represent the heart of God to his generation and subsequent generations through the words that he wrote that has been affecting the church ever since.

We're not talking about some charlatan here, some phony. We're not talking about some preacher that is self-appointed who has a motive in wanting to build his own kingdom or rob God's people of their money. We're talking about a genuine called one.

And yet, look into the window of his heart and take a picture of the maturity that was operating in him. Beginning in chapter 2, 1 Thessalonians chapter 2. For you yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you that it was not in vain. Talking about those who were in the city of Thessalonica.

But even after that, we had suffered before and were shamefully entreated, as you know, at Philippi. They were at Philippi before they came to Thessalonica and they were driven out of the city. They were shamefully entreated.

We were bold in our God to speak unto you the Gospel of God with much contention. That word means wrestling, with much wrestling. For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile.

But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, which tries our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak of covetousness. God is witness.

Now, you know, each one of these statements we could take and we could run with for a good hour. We're not going to do that. Because that's not the purpose.

Although, I have to confess, I'm sorely tempted to take these statements. They're so, so rich. But I'm not going to do it.

Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others. When we might have been burdensome as the apostles of Christ, but we were... What's that word? Gentle. Any other translations? Have a different word there? Listen.

But we were gentle. Listen to the meaning of that word. And look into the measure of character and spiritual maturity that was in this man.

The word gentle means to follow. As denoting one who readily follows the will of another and is ready to do what he desires or wants. One who follows.

It denotes one who is readily able to follow the will of another and is ready to do what he desires or wants. But we were gentle among you. Even as a nurse cherished her children.

One of the outstanding character qualities that God wants to place in us is this quality that Paul possessed through his union with Christ. One that enabled him to readily follow and even do what another person wants. As opposed to exerting his own desires.

Exerting his own will. Now I don't know about you, but in my observations of being a father of seven children, I've seen a consistent phenomenon. Most all the conflicts that I see with my children stem from whether it's two of them fighting or three or four, is there is an unwillingness on anyone's part to simply follow along and let the other one do what he wants or she wants.

This one wants to do this. This one wants to do that. And this one wants to do this.

And none of them have any clue of what it means to be gentle. None of them have any clue in wanting to say, okay, we'll do what you want to do. It's unheard of in the heart of a child, isn't it? It's unheard of in the heart of an immature heart to say, okay, we'll do what you want to do.

Brothers and sisters, this is the disease, the chronic disease that's plaguing the church today. This character quality that Paul possessed enabled him to walk among the believers in the meekness of Christ. Willing to be led.

Willing to follow. Willing to do things in a way that might not have been according to his own personal taste, just so he could serve. Now this isn't a call to compromise.

We're not talking about compromising that which is truth, but we're talking about having that capacity to be gentle and to be led by another and not to insist on your own way. How's that working in your life today? How do you do when issues come up? Non-essential issues. And it's a question of whether or not it's your way or their way.

Do you have maturity? Enough to say, oh, it's okay. We'll do it your way. Or do you get all bent out of shape and exert yourself even to the point of creating contention? Even to the point of creating strife? Even to the point of hurting feelings? Now if anyone had the right to exert, it was Paul, didn't he? Did any of you have a vision from Jesus and knock you down and blind you and commission you to be an apostle to the whole world? I don't think so.

He did. But yet, when he walked among God's people, did he walk with an attitude? Like, do you know who you're talking to? Do you know who you're talking to? My name is Paul. I saw Jesus.

He did not come in that attitude. He came in the meekness of Christ. Do you know why? Because Christ Himself, the Lord of Heaven, emptied Himself and took on the servant garment and walked in our midst and was gentle in our midst and served us and loved us.

You hang around with Jesus long enough and those qualities start developing in you. Amen? So, this quality of gentleness is a very important quality that God wants to work in us. Now, I'd like to begin, having mentioned the word gentleness, I'd like to begin now in describing different features of agape love when it's being expressed.

We all know the Scripture in 1 Corinthians 13. 1 Corinthians 13 describes the character qualities of maturity. We learned in previous messages that maturity is not identified simply because we are gifted.

Maturity is not identified in our life simply because we know a lot. Maturity is not identified in our life simply because we have accomplished certain things in life. And it's not necessarily because we are older rather than younger.

But character, spiritual maturity is identified with being like, the likeness of Jesus Christ. As it says in 2 Corinthians 3 that we're being changed by the Spirit of God into the image of Christ. And the image of Christ, the likeness of Christ is best demonstrated through understanding agape love.

And so the qualities of agape love, as you well know, 1 Corinthians 13, beginning in verse 4, charity suffers long and is kind. Charity envieth not. Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Charity never fails. I'd like to begin by mentioning specific features that characterize maturity. The first that I want to mention, a maturing Christian will have the capacity through God's grace to forgive with no exceptions.

Ephesians 4.32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Colossians 3.13 Forbearing one another and forgiving one another if any man have a quarrel against you, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. Jesus said in Matthew 6.12 that if you do not forgive men their trespasses against you, then Heavenly Father will not forgive you of your sins.

An immature Christian will allow unforgiveness and bitterness to fester in their heart for an indefinite period of time. But when God begins to work in us through His sovereign, fatherly, providential way, we begin to awaken to see that we cannot allow our hearts to be poisoned with the spiritual cancer of unforgiveness and we must, we must, we must look to Jesus and deal with it and get that rock out of us so that our hearts can be free from unforgiveness. You see, maturity knows what is right.

And in spite of feelings, in spite of emotional capacity, maturity looks to God to set in order what is right and doesn't tolerate what's wrong. But immaturity might recognize something's wrong, might recognize something's not quite right, but not deal with it. And isn't that the truth in the natural too? As in the natural, so in the spiritual.

We see the tendency within children and teenagers and young adults. They know something's wrong, but they just don't deal with it. They hope it might go away.

They hope if they get a good night's sleep and wake up, everything will be better in the morning. But it's not that way, is it? How many have come to see that you've lived long enough to know that if something is not right, it's not going to go away when you have a good night's sleep? How many have found that to be true? How many have hoped that you wouldn't have to deal with the issue? That some magical way it'll all be taken care of, but you've come to realize that's not the way it is. How many have come to see that? How many have come to realize that you can't go drinking thinking that it's going to take care of the problem? You can't try drugs thinking that that's going to take care of the problem.

You can't find a fantasy world and avoid reality hoping that if you stay in this fantasy world, maybe when you come back to reality, it won't be there anymore. Did anyone ever find that true? That when you went into your fantasy world, whatever it is, when you came back it wasn't there? Anybody find that true? It doesn't happen. That's what immaturity does.

Immaturity finds ways to avoid the issue. But our Father in Heaven is very forbearing and patient during our immaturities, isn't He? And He forgives us. And He covers our sin.

And He's patient. And He's forbearing. But there comes a day when we hear our Father say, it's time.

I will not allow you to continue to engage in self-deception anymore. I've mentioned it before. I'll mention it again.

The worst deception that a human being can fall into is self-deception. That's not original. I heard it from Bob Grant, talk show host.

You might not agree with him. I don't agree with everything he says. But when he said that, I said, now that is true.

So, when you are deceived about yourself, it's the worst form of self-deception. And so therefore, our first feature on the road to spiritual maturity is you will forgive with no exception. You might ask the question, well, does this mean that immaturity or immature people will not forgive? They'll certainly look for a way not to.

But a mature heart will not. Has someone hurt you? Dead or alive? Has someone failed you? Have you wrestled with a root of bitterness in your spirit towards someone? God's Word to you this morning is simple. I will give you the grace to forgive if you will acknowledge your unforgiveness.

Stop denying it. Stop pretending it's not there. Acknowledge it before God.

Call it what it is. Sin. You don't know what this person did to me.

Well, let me ask you a question. What did you do to Jesus? Did He forgive you? Would you like Jesus to treat you the way you're treating that person? Yeah, but they hurt me. Well, did you hurt Jesus? Did you

betray Him? Were you unfaithful to Him? But is He offering you forgiveness now through His Son? Yes, He is.

I know it's painful. I know your emotions can feel all those terrible things that emotions can feel over this issue. And don't deny it, but Jesus is able.

I pray that if you are hearing the voice of God this morning calling you to spiritual maturity, you will come to grips with forgiveness. Another reference, Mark 11, 25, 26. Luke 17, 3 and 4 for you who are taking notes.

I won't go into them, but I'll read the next verse or the next quality of maturity, contentment. I'd like to turn you to Matthew. We're probably not going to get any further than this point, okay? We're only going to go for a short amount of time, and then we're going to give time for prayer, and we'll give time for the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

We're looking at a second feature, a second quality of spiritual maturity. Contentment. Matthew 6, beginning in verse 24.

Listen closely. Listen closely. No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and mammon. Verse 24 identifies the root cause of not being content. The lack of contentment is a heart that is divided, that has not found its ultimate rest in God alone.

It wants to serve both God and something else. And that's where we get in trouble. We're living in a culture today, dear beloved, where the word contentment is nearly obsolete from the vocabulary of the American family.

Who is content? Everybody's after the Joneses. Everybody's after more and more and more. Oh my God, have mercy upon us.

We've lost the joy of being content with what we need. And we've fallen into the trap of chasing after our wants. And it has resulted in broken families.

It has resulted in ruined lives. It has resulted in divorces. It has resulted in a church that is full of disease.

Contentment. Contentment. Therefore, one student in Bible school used to say in describing the word therefore, he'd say, therefore is therefore.

That word therefore is therefore because of what was just said. In other words, the word therefore connects this thought with the thought that's about to be expounded. Because you can't serve two masters, Jesus is saying.

Because you cannot serve God and mammon, therefore, I say unto you, take no thought for your life. What ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on, is not the life more than me and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they toil not, neither do they spin.

And yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothed the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you? O ye of little faith, therefore, take no thought. You know how many times in this passage, I believe I counted it a few months ago, and I could be in error, but I think Jesus says in this chapter five times, take no thought.

Do you think He might have been trying to emphasize something? Take no thought. Now let me ask you a question. What is the main preoccupation with the American church today? These very things that Jesus said, take no thought for.

Verse 31, Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewith shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek. For your Heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow. For the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Beloved, we need a hearing heart now to hear God speak to us about these words that His Son spoke. We're dealing with qualities of maturity. We've looked first at a forgiving heart.

Now we're looking at contemptment. How much of what you are doing, how much of your sweat and labor is being birthed out of necessity because it is lawful to labor and work for that which is needful? God's not against that. Or, how much is being birthed out of a lack of contentment? Not trusting Heavenly Father.

This is an issue that every maturing heart will have to come to grips with. Hebrews, are we still together on this issue of maturity? Do we still aspire for maturity? I want maturity. I do.

I don't care if it hurts. I don't care. I prayed long ago and I said, God, when I start fussing and I start bawling and I start crying out and saying, Oh, God, stop this.

It hurts too much. And I start telling You, Lord, I want something else. Do me a favor, Lord.

Ignore me. Ignore me. Don't listen to me, Lord.

In my moments of weakness, when I throw a temper tantrum. Now, I know none of you have done that. I realize that.

I'm just confessing my faults, but I realize you can't really relate to this because none of you do that. But I'm willing to admit that from time to time, I have a hard time with what the Lord is doing in my life because His end for me is something that without His grace I can't attain to. And I've prayed over again, over and over, Lord, during those moments when I'm fussing and bawling and crying and complaining, You just close Your ears to me and You embrace me and You say, Son, it'll be alright, but I'm not going to do it.

I'm going to keep You in the fire. I'm going to keep You right in the trial in spite of what You say. And you know what? I've received from the Lord an assurance that He's going to do that.

So I feel good. I feel good. Not because I'm such a holy person and I know that in every test I go through, I just have angels' wings and a halo.

No. No, I feel good because God's promised me He's going to ignore my kicking and fussing. That's the only hope I have.

Hebrews 13, beginning in verse 3, Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them, and them which suffer adversity as being yourselves also in the body. Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled, but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. Let your conversation be without covetousness and be content with such things as ye have.

For He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. Verse 5, Let your conversation, that word conversation, implies your whole way of life. In other words, when you study the etymology of that word, it actually implies a center and then a circle being drawn around that center.

And everything that is in that circle comes under that statement. So what that's saying is let your conversation, or let the whole scope of your entire life, that's what it's really saying, the whole scope of your entire life and everything that's in it, let that whole area be without covetousness and be content with such things as ye have. Is this really in the Bible? Is this really something God is saying? I know.

We never hear it, do we? I know. It's not what they're telling us. But it's what's there.

This is what Jesus wants. Imagine now your whole life. Go through it.

Big circle. Is it free from covetousness? Is it characterized by an overall contentment? A contentment and a thankfulness and a gratefulness to God for what He has done in providing you what you have need of with a sense of passion for Him. My life is content.

I don't need to buy in to the American dream. I'm not called to get my roots way, way, way down here on earth. I am content with the provision that God makes for me.

I will not sacrifice my family, my walk with Jesus and my relationships with brothers and sisters in the church for the God of success. Brothers and sisters, let's just listen to Him. Listen.

Don't feel threatened. Don't feel condemned. Don't feel overwhelmed by this Word.

I'm not preaching rules, am I? No, I'm not telling you what you can or can't do. That's not my job. I'm not interested in that.

I'm not trying to conform you to some religious code. If you act like this, you're content. If you act like this, there's greed.

No, no, no. Don't go there. Don't go there.

I'm just asking you through the Holy Spirit to do one thing. Ask your shepherd. That's not me.

I'm not your shepherd. There's only one good shepherd. His name is Jesus.

Ask your shepherd. Lord, contentment, a quality of spiritual maturity. Lord, show me where in my life am I demonstrating a lack of contentment? Heal me.

Show me the way. Show me Your way. This is an issue between you and your shepherd.

Not with the church. Not with the one next to you. God might speak to the one next to you.

One thing. He might show you something totally different. Don't let your brother bring you into bondage over this.

But you listen to the shepherd. You let him guide you over this matter of contentment. One Scripture and we're going to close.

1 Timothy 6. Verse 3. Chapter 6. 1 Timothy. If any man teach otherwise and consent not to the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ. You see what the standard by which Paul determined whether someone was teaching the right thing or not? The words of Jesus Christ.

We just read from Matthew 6 and we just read from Hebrews 13. The words of Jesus Christ, right? See, when the Holy Spirit really starts working in people and in a church, let me tell you, the true move of the Spirit of God is not going to lead people off into ecstasy. It's going to lead them to the person of Christ and to the Word of God and to a passion to be transformed into the image and likeness of Christ.

That's what God does among His people. Alright. Verse 4. He is proud, knowing nothing, but dotting about questions and stripes of words whereof comes envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings, men of corrupt minds, destitute of the truth.

Supposing that gain is godliness, from such withdraw thyself. But godliness with what? Contentment is great gain. Godliness with contentment is great gain.

Do you want to be successful in the eyes of God? Pursue godliness. Pursue a vital relationship with Jesus Christ. Pursue to know His righteousness, His holiness, His purity, His long-suffering, His patience.

And pursue contentment. Pursue the ability to be content with what you have need of and not constantly be longing to satisfy your every craving and desire. And then you will come to know great gain.

Contrary to what many people think, great gain from an eternal perspective is not investing your money in Wall Street. Now, are you saying you're opposed to that? Of course I'm not opposed to that. Of course I'm not.

Listen to what the Spirit is saying. Again, we're not trying to determine rules. It's a heart matter now.

What's in your heart? What are you after? That's the key. Alright, here we go. For we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content. But they that will be rich. The word there, will, is a word indicating continuous action.

So another translation is this. But those who are continuously desiring wealth. Now brothers and sisters, this is not my opinion now.

This is what the Word says. Those who are continuously desiring wealth will fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

The absence of contentment will eventually result in pursuing after money, material things, and everything that you desire in an unrestrained manner. And that will result in drowning your life into many hurtful and foolish things. Okay.

We're going to close now. We have many more qualities that we're going to look at. But the two today we're focusing on is forgiveness and contentment.

I'm going to ask if Colette would come to the piano please. And we want to spend a few moments in the presence of Jesus. And like I said, I want you to listen to what the Lord would say to you about forgiveness and about contentment.

And do whatever He says. If you don't really know what He's saying, then wait and ask Him. And believe me, He'll speak to you if you'll just listen.

I also want to say that anyone now who has any interest or responsibilities in helping with the nursery and in packing the nursery up and bringing it back behind the stage, you may leave at this time and go to the nursery and help work there. If you have any responsibilities there, we'd like to help.

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Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/30/SID30484.mp3>

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