

Global Zoom Q&A Session (Feb 20, 2021)

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking God's mercy and balance in dealing with others, focusing on mercy over judgment. It highlights the need to follow God's standards on divorce and remarriage, showing mercy to those who repent and seek God's forgiveness. The sermon also stresses the significance of studying the Bible thoroughly to understand God's principles and teachings.

Scripture: Luke 4:18, Isaiah 61:2, Matthew 5:32, Acts 17:30, Romans 13:8, Luke 14:25

Topics: "God's Mercy", "Understanding God's Standards"

Description

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Transcript

So, we've got a lot of questions and I'll ask the ones that we think we can try to handle, try to do in this time and if we don't get to them, we'll try to do them in the next session. A couple of questions related to sin, you were talking about a sense of immorality. How should a spouse react to a husband's admittedly or sorrowfully watching pornography even though they don't get angry, but they're sad and don't know how to help and the husband I think in this case is acknowledging that they're helpless.

What can a wife do in a situation like that? Well, the first step is to have faith to believe Matthew 12:1, Jesus came to save his people from their sins. Salvation is by faith, forgiveness of sins is by faith, salvation from hell is by faith, salvation from sin is by faith and faith is not just an intellectual belief that God can do something that a lot of people in the world have, God can do all things, but it's more than that. It's believing that God can do that for me and leaning upon God.

It is like the branch in the vine, the branch in a tree helplessly depending on God saying I cannot produce any fruit myself, I lean upon you. This is my testimony after more than 55 years of preaching, even now when I come to preach, I say, Lord, I do not know what to say, please help me. I'm like a helpless branch.

I can produce no fruit from my preaching. Everything is by faith. This is the meaning of faith, the branch helplessly depending on the sap that flows from the tree.

So that's what a wife should do. Lord, I can't help him. He seems to be sincere, wants to be free.

I want to pray that you will help him and spend time in prayer with your husband and encourage him and try to find some diversion where they can spend that time profitably and I believe that a husband and wife should have a happy sexual relationship. That's also important and pray that together and ask him every time he's tempted to run to you or run somewhere else or call you on the phone or something so that he can do what the Bible says to flee from immorality. Otherwise, it can be a tremendous problem for many men, but I believe God can deliver.

There's so many cases I know of people who sought the Lord and being delivered. God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. You read in Jeremiah 29 verse 11 to 13 onwards, you will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart.

And I guarantee that anyone who seeks God, you're a wife seeking God with all your heart for the deliverance of your husband, God will answer you. And also related to that, that in speaking about fighting against sin, can you give us some guidance on how to do that in a way where the victory over sin itself is not the end, but glorifying God, doing it out of love for Jesus rather than focusing on the sin and overcoming that specifically? Yeah, one of the things we discover is in the New Testament is the motive is more important than just the action, that if my motive is good, then the action is good. If the motive is bad, even if I do a good action, it's not acceptable in God's eyes.

The whole Christian life is described in Hebrews 12 verse 1 and 2 as running a race, looking unto Jesus all the time. There's not a single moment when we should not be looking at him. So if you meditate on the scriptures and allow the Holy Spirit to show you the glory of Jesus, Jesus said, all authority in heaven and earth is given to me.

Satan was defeated on the cross. Very, very important to understand that on the cross, not only our sins were taken away, all the hold that Satan had on our life was broken completely. Satan has got no right to touch me.

It took me some time to discover that. So many Christians are afraid of the devil. I get numerous emails saying, the devil's harassing me here, the devil's harassing me there.

I say, brother, the devil was defeated on the cross. Don't give him credit for anything. For example, when an interruption like this comes in a meeting or in a Zoom meeting, people say, well, the devil came in.

That was not the devil. That was just a technological problem. Don't give the devil credit for something which happened in technology.

I don't do that. I don't give the devil credit for anything. He was defeated on the cross years ago.

He has no right over me. And if God allows some technical interruption, okay, good. Let's learn patience there and let's learn to meditate on what we heard during that time and come back.

We never give the credit to the devil for anything. And so I must see that Jesus defeated Satan on the cross and he rose up in heaven to send the Holy Spirit. I look at it like this, the old covenant and the new covenant.

In the old covenant, Moses went up to the mountain and brought down the law and it kept people in bondage for 1500 years. Jesus went up to heaven and sent not another law, but the Holy Spirit. Many Christians live by a law.

They read, I must do this. I must not do that. I must go to church.

I must read the Bible. No, you must be filled with the Holy Spirit. Ask the Holy Spirit to come in.

That's what's made the presence of Jesus real for me. I'll tell you why. When Jesus was leaving the disciples of the Last Supper, he told them, I'm going to ask the Father to give you another helper.

Who was the first helper? Jesus. John 14, verse 16. I'll ask the Father to give you another helper.

And the world cannot receive him, but you can receive him and he will stay with you. And he said further down that when this helper comes, John 16, verse 14, John 16, 14, he will take the things of mine and show it to you. There's no way to have the presence of Jesus with us or to know more about Jesus, except the Holy Spirit shows us.

I thank God that the Holy Spirit has set me free from the law. And the Holy Spirit makes the presence of Jesus real to me in times of pressure. I remember the early days of my Christian life for years and years.

I would frequently be discouraged, but it's all gone. I'm testifying it's gone from my life because the Holy Spirit has made the presence of Jesus real. The presence of Jesus makes us avoid sin and we see more and more of his glory as the Holy Spirit shows me more and more of the inner life of Jesus that I can follow.

That's the only way that we are supposed to live this life. Can you give us some advice on a teaching that's popular in Christian of today's deliverance ministries? And I honestly, I'm not sure what all that entails, but I think some of that includes freeing believers from spirits and things like that. What is your opinion of that and guidance you can give on the deliverance theology? See, we read in the scriptures that Jesus delivered people from demons.

People were demon possessed in Jesus time and a demon possessed person does not require counseling. They need deliverance. It's no use asking that demon possessed person to accept Christ.

They must be delivered. And we read in the Acts of the Apostles that Paul and the apostles delivered people from demons. And that's something we have encountered in our own ministry.

I mean, there are numerous people I've delivered by, I mean, in the name of Jesus, from demons. And I sense that they are demon possessed. And one way to find out is I asked them to say, say that Jesus Christ is Lord as my Lord.

Say that Jesus Christ came in my flesh and overcame you, Satan, you were defeated on the cross. A demon possessed person will not say that. They will not acknowledge that Jesus Christ is their Lord.

They will not acknowledge that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. They will not acknowledge that Satan was defeated on the cross. Then I know there's a demon there.

And in the name of Jesus, I cast out and I tell you my testimony. I've never had to say that more than once. None of all the shouting and yelling that I see so many people when they cast out demons.

I do it the way Jesus did and the apostles did it. In the name of Jesus, get out of him. Get out of her.

And it's gone. And if it's not gone, once the disciples came and asked Jesus, why didn't it go? I said, you've got to go and pray and fast. Well, if you don't pray and fast, you don't keep your conscience clear.

You haven't forgiven anybody. Don't try casting out demons. The demons say, I know all about your life.

Don't try anything with me. Keep your life pure and clear. And God's given us authority over Satan.

So there is such a real thing as demon possession. I remember once some young lady came to our meeting and the leader of the meeting asked me to counsel her after the meeting. And we were sitting there with all the others a little distance away.

And I was talking to her. She was sitting there facing me. And I said to her, ask Jesus to come into your heart.

She said, I can't say that name. She moved her mouth. She couldn't say Jesus.

Then I knew it was a demon. And I cast out the demon. And I said, now say, Lord Jesus, come to my heart.

Again, she said, I can't say that name. And the Lord told me, that's just habit. The demon is gone.

Tell her to say it. I said, in Jesus' name, say it. Say, Lord Jesus, come into my heart.

And she said it. And she was all so curled up in dirty clothes that day. The next morning, she came to see me at the next day's meeting and said, do you recognize me, Brother Zag? I said, I hardly recognize you.

Completely changed in one day. So demon possession is real. That young lady did not need counseling.

She needed deliverance. So that's a real thing. But don't go to these meetings where they are yelling and screaming and telling you to do all types of things.

And the other thing I want to tell you, a true Christian can never be demon-possessed. Christ and a demon can never, never live in the same heart. If a demon is in a person, that person is definitely not born again.

Christ is not in that person. What fellowship is Christ with the devil, it says in 2 Corinthians 6. So all these people who teach that Christians can have demons, don't believe that rubbish. No Christian can have a demon.

A lot of people get into condemnation because of that. A Christian can be tempted strongly with all types of sins, but not demon-possessed. If a person is demon-possessed, then he's not really born again.

That's for sure. He needs deliverance. But don't go to people who yell and scream at you.

Any brother who can have faith, anyone can cast out a demon if his own conscience is clear and he believes that Jesus defeated Satan on the cross and believes that he can cast out that demon. Yeah. You talked on the COVID vaccine.

I know there's a lot of people that have questions on it. We don't necessarily have to go into too much detail on it, but I'll just ask these two things. What guidance could you give if there's some uncertainty

about how the vaccine is created? Say, stem cell research, born babies, and the other is slightly related, but maybe slightly a different topic is related to the mark of the beast.

There's a lot of people that feel or think that the mark of the beast is some sort of physical thing. Could you speak on how we can be sure that that's not something we would accidentally get through some other means that the devil could somehow allow us to take the mark of the beast unknowingly through things like the vaccine or other things like that? God has given you a free will, and he respects that. There are many preachers who try to rule over you.

They are trying to overrule your free will. Never allow a person to rule you like that. Your will must be subject to Christ, and if a godly man is your leader, submit to his authority, but not where it violates your own free will.

And I want to say this. In Romans chapter 14 is a very important chapter because it allows for the fact that people in a church and believers can have two different opinions on something. And that applies to many areas.

In Romans 14, it's speaking about two particular areas where believers had differences of opinion in those days. One was, should we keep the Sabbath or not? Now, that's not a big problem for us because we never grew up keeping the Sabbath. But in those days, many converts were from Jewish backgrounds.

They had 30 years, they had kept the Sabbath. That means every Saturday they wouldn't do any work and they wouldn't even cook food. And now they've become Christians.

They say, what do I do on a Sabbath? Subconsciously, they want to not do any work. And that was OK. There's nothing wrong if you don't do any work on the Sabbath.

But they were telling other people also to do it. And that's where Paul put his foot down to the Holy Spirit. He said, no, give freedom to people.

If some person feels that way, let him do it. If a person wants to observe a day for the Lord, Saturday or Sunday, let him do it. But give the other person freedom not to do it.

For example, some people feel they should not go for an examination on a Sunday. Or they shouldn't play any games on a Sunday. I personally don't have a problem with that.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10:31, do all for the glory of God. That's the main thing. I can play games for the glory of God.

I can do anything for the glory of God. I go to work for the glory of God. You can do an examination for the glory of God on a Saturday, Sunday, any day.

But if somebody has a conscience that troubles him, don't do it. That means he need not do it. I'm still free to do it.

Don't force other people. The same thing, the other problem they had those days was food in the marketplace. Meat was offered to the idols before being put in the market.

That happens in India too. So some people say, no, if it's offered to the idols, I can't touch it. It'll harm me.

But Paul says, what rubbish? An idol is just a block of wood or brass or something. You put some meat in front of it. What happens to the meat? Nothing.

Because I'm going to enjoy it. If somebody else has a conscience about it, let them not take it. So each person must follow his own conscience.

But if your action stumbles another, avoid it. That's another thing. But the main thing here is freedom in areas which are not clearly spoken in scripture.

The scripture does not clearly say you must take medicine. Doesn't say you must take vaccination. You don't have to take it.

So one person has a conscience about taking any type of vaccination or he has a doubt about it. Don't take it. That's fine.

There's nothing wrong in that. But make sure you protect yourself from sickness and your children especially. And so I wouldn't force people on that.

But that has got nothing to do with the mark of the beast. There are all types of these theories that people spread, not only in this area, but in 101 other areas. And that's part of the problem nowadays with the internet.

All types of things. Everybody's reading and listening and getting disturbed. Stick to the scriptures.

And don't believe everything that is said over there. If you personally have a doubt about something, avoid it. But don't go around spreading these conspiracy theories yourself.

If it is not in the scriptures, it's not something that God has said. And go by your conscience. And I don't know where all the medicines are made from.

I'm not going to be disturbed by that. I pray over everything. If I eat food, I pray over it.

If I take a medicine, I pray over it. And I say, Lord, bless this food to my body. Bless this medicine and make sure it heals me.

And if there's poison in the food, we read in Mark 16, God will protect us. And if there's some problem in the vaccine, God will protect us too. I have faith for that.

If you don't have faith for something, avoid it. That's the teaching of Romans 14. Let everybody go by what he has faith for in the last verses of Romans 14.

So I would not force people to take a vaccine or not to take it. So go by your conscience and go by what you have faith for. I have no problem myself.

But when a new vaccine comes up, of course, some people may feel correctly. Let me see if it's working. Let me see if there's some ill effects on it.

That is common sense. And so how long you wait to see whether it's working or not. Some people say, well, I don't want to get the sickness.

So how long am I going to wait? So it's up to the individual. And in our church, I do not teach that you must take it or you must not take it. But I'd say go by your own conscience and feel free.

But don't condemn yourself if you take it. It's certainly not the mark of the beast. The mark of the beast is very difficult to define.

But let me just show you briefly, since a lot of people talk about this, the mark of the beast. Let me show you what scripture says. And Revelation chapter 13 and verse 18.

Here's where people get the mark of the beast from. Here is wisdom. Revelation 13, 18.

Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast. The beast is the devil. And the great dragon and the person whom he puts out there, the Antichrist or the spirit of the Antichrist as well, which is in the world even today.

It was in the world when John chapter two, even in the first century. The number of the beast is the number of man. Six, six, six.

What is the spiritual meaning of that? Why is six called the number of a man? In this verse, because man was created on the sixth day. Genesis chapter one. God is a trinity.

Father, son, and Holy Spirit. Six is the number of man. So when you say six, six, six, it is man trying to be like the trinity.

Man trying to be God. That is the spirit behind this. Let him who has wisdom understand this.

A man trying to be God is the spirit of the Antichrist. You read that. You take time to read second Thessalonians chapter two, where a man sits up in the throne acting like God.

That's the spirit of the Antichrist. And it's all over. It's found in the church.

It's found in some preachers who act like God towards you, trying to control your life. That is the spirit of the Antichrist. And it is all over.

And it's not some mark that somebody can put on your hand or inject into you. That's a lot of garbage. Nobody can touch my body.

My body belongs to the Lord. And if accidentally, Mark 16 is very clear. If you accidentally take poison, God will heal you.

It's a great word. Take it. You read towards the end of Mark 16.

But at the end of Mark, Revelation 13 verse 18, it says here that in contrast to that, Revelation 14 one, you read about those who got the mark of the lamb on their forehead. And it's written the name of the Father and of the Lamb of God. I'm publicly a Christian.

I want you to see this contrast here. When the Antichrist tells people to get the mark of the beast, it's written, you should read this whole section from Revelation chapter 13 and verse 11 downwards in particularly verse 16, Revelation 13, 16. The spirit of the Antichrist tells people to get the mark of the beast on their right hand or on their forehead.

It's all spiritual. Remember the first three verses of Revelation chapter one. This is symbolic language.

That's how Revelation chapter one, verse one, two, three says. Don't just accept it literally. It's symbolic.

Remember that throughout the Bible, when it says a sharp sword comes out of Jesus mouth, it's not a sharp sword. Tongue is not like a sharp sword. It's symbolic.

When it says his legs are made of bronze, his legs are not made of bronze. It's symbolic. And so here also the mark of the beast is symbolic.

16, he asks people to take the mark on their right hand or on their forehead. What is the meaning of that? Meditate on it. You can on the forehead means everybody can see it.

Satan says you can be a publicly a follower of me or hide it in your hand and be a secret follower of me. I give you the option. You can be a secret follower of Satan with the mark hidden in your hand.

Nobody will see it or be an open follower of Satan. There are people today who are open followers of Satan. Atheists and many others.

And there are others who are secret followers of Satan. The mark is hidden in their right hand. An accuser of the brethren.

Satan is called the accuser of the brethren. You go around accusing people. You got the mark of the beast in your right hand.

You're an accuser too. Yeah, you don't have to get a vaccine for that. But in contrast, Revelation 14 one, the mark of the Lamb of God, you cannot have it in your right hand.

It has to be on your forehead. In other words, even though the devil says you can be a public follower of me or a secret follower of me. Jesus says you cannot be a secret follower.

No. You must be a public follower of me. It must be on your forehead.

You must be openly a disciple of Jesus Christ. That is the contrast. So I say I want to be openly a follower of Jesus Christ.

And if they kill me for it, like in the first century, so be it. I'm not going to shrink back from that and avoid it. So that is my understanding of what is known as the mark of the beast.

How would you, in this time when the government has restricted church meetings and things like that, how would you guide us on how we should respond in honoring and submitting to earthly authority? Some churches, as you know, in the news, they've taken the approach that this is a form of persecution in restricting church access. What would you speak on that? Could you speak on that? Yeah, there is a verse in Hebrews 10, verse 25, which says, don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together. Hebrews 10, 25, but so much the more as you see the day approaching.

See, the Bible does not ask you to do impossible things. For example, if many Christians in the early days were imprisoned for their faith, locked up in solitary confinement, how is that person going to obey that command to assemble with other believers? Is he going to ask for release from the prison? They're not going to release him. There are many people in such situations.

There are many people in countries where they're not allowed to go out or a wife who's not allowed to go out, a husband does not, she's a Christian disciple of Jesus, husband does not allow her to go away from the house. How will she obey that command? Don't forsake the assembling of yourselves. God is reasonable.

Don't take the word of God in such a way that you get condemned over it. God's word is not given for condemnation. Where you have opportunity, by all means, assemble together.

But where you don't have opportunity, like this, for example, I believe we are assembling together right now, even though I'm not physically in your room. I find, I'll tell you honestly, my testimony in the last one year, I have spoken in more meetings than in any previous year in the last 50 years. I thank God we are not assembling together.

I thank God for this opportunity. God is sovereign. He overrules all the limitations placed by men.

So I say this is to me, this is assembling together. I'm delighted to see your faces and you can see mine. What more do you need? In fact, you're probably seeing me more clearly than if you were in a meeting with 10,000 people and I am so far away on the pulpit.

So I say there are many, many blessings that come through even Zoom. So I don't believe that we should be too much worried about physically meeting together in a place. The early Christians could not physically meet together often.

They had to run in caves and forests and we live in a land of freedom. There are places today where you cannot meet publicly. We have some churches also in some countries where they're not allowed to meet openly.

They have to meet in secret. Yeah, so they meet in secret. But it says in Romans 13 verse 1, every person, Christians, must be subject to the governing authorities because there is no authority except from God and all those who exist are established by God.

And if you resist the authority and the command they give, you are actually resisting the command of God. And if you oppose that, you'll be punished and you deserve to be punished. Because rulers, you don't have to be afraid of rulers if you're behaving well.

But do you want to have no fear of authority? Then do what is good and you'll have a praise for sin because that authority is a servant of God. Verse 4, for your good. If you disobey them, do what's evil, be afraid because he's got a sword.

He's going to punish you. And he's a servant of God. Verse 4. Do you know that the ruling authorities are servants of God according to this verse? And do you know who was the emperor in Rome? This is a letter to Rome, Christians in Rome.

And do you know who was the ruler and authority in Rome at that time? One of the most wicked emperors called Nero, who persecuted Christians like anything. Let me paraphrase to you, read it to you. Every person in Rome must be subject to the Roman Emperor Nero.

Whatever rules he makes for the country. If he tells you to disobey Christ in some way, then don't obey him. If he tells you to tell a lie, tell you don't preach the gospel, that's asking you to disobey a specific

command of Christ.

Then you don't have to listen to him. If he tells you to commit a sin. So there is an authority, but above that authority is God.

Even in your home, there's an authority. The father is the authority over the children. The husband is the authority over the wife.

In your office, the boss is the authority over you. In society, the government is the authority over you. But above all these authorities is God.

We don't forget that. So if you're, let me take an example. If you're a wife who's got an unconverted husband, but above that husband is God.

So if your husband tells you to do something, which is contrary to what God tells you to do, God is above your husband. You listen to God. You don't have to listen to your husband.

But if it is something where God has not said anything, then listen to your husband. There are numerous things where God has not said anything. Then you must listen to your husband.

Same way, where there's no specific command of God, we must obey those in authority. So I do not take this as a law that we have to meet together. I think we have to understand that we don't forsake it whenever there's opportunity.

But we have to use our common sense to understand how all these things mean. And think of Christians who are in places where there's persecution, particularly in the early days. How did they understand it? They didn't have access to go to a court of law.

They'd be thrown out. Because we have freedom in some countries to go to a court of law. They take advantage of it.

But I say, as far as I'm concerned, I believe we must be subject to authority. But again, after Romans 13 comes Romans 14. And we already saw that.

Give freedom to other people to have their own view. That's the balance of Scripture. Related to authority, can you talk about authority in churches? What is true submission to spiritual authority in a church look like? And how do you know when, how can one know if the authority being imposed within a church is a controlling type of authority? The Bible says we must be subject to the elders in a church.

1 Peter 5, Hebrews 13, 17, etc. But again, above the elder is God. So if an elder tells you to do something which God tells you not to do, you listen to God.

Or if an elder tries to control your life, that takes you away from the control of God, don't listen to him. Because God must be head, Christ is your head, not an elder. And where does the elder have authority? In the church.

An elder has no authority to tell you what type of house you should rent or buy, or whom you should marry, or what job you should take. No, that's outside the church sphere. If you have confidence in him, you can take his advice.

There's a lot of difference between submitting to an elder and having confidence in an elder. Many elders, even in our CFC churches, are not, you know, new churches that have come up that we put an elder, but he may not be a very mature person. And somebody there may not have confidence in him.

Then I say in church matters, you must submit to that elder. What that means is, if he says the church meeting is at 10 o'clock in the morning, come at 10 o'clock in the morning. Don't come at 10.30. Submit to him.

And if he says, let's stand up and sing this song, don't say, I'm not going to stand up. I'm going to sit down. It's that type of thing.

Anything within the church, or we're going to have a meeting on Wednesday. You say, no, we should have a meeting on Thursday. No, that's rebellion against church authority.

Submit to the church elder in all these matters. But if he tells you personal things, like what job you should take home, you should marry, what house you should rent, et cetera, you don't have to listen to him if you don't have confidence in him. Confidence cannot be forced.

That comes automatically. You see a godly man and you say, boy, it's for my protection to take his advice. Then you will take his advice.

So I have told people in our own churches, submit to the elders in matters relating to the church and church meetings and when they meet and et cetera, et cetera. But in matters that are not related to the church, you can take his advice if you have confidence in him. If you don't have confidence in him, consult another elder in some other place, another country, perhaps, in whom you have confidence so that you can get good advice.

You don't have to have confidence in your local elder, but you must submit to your local elder in church matters. I want to go back to the question about vaccine because there's one question maybe you could touch on if you feel free. If it gets to the point where there are significant restrictions on the earth with regard to travel or buying and selling necessities and that's controlled by whether you have the vaccine or not, how should a Christian who maybe doesn't have the faith to take the vaccine or has concerns about it respond in a situation like that? Okay, you need to understand the spirit behind all these things.

When it says in Revelation 13 about the spirit of the antichrist controlling people and telling you can't buy, you can't sell unless you take the mark of the beast, the whole purpose is to get people to worship that leader. What is the motive? The motive is you've got to worship the leader. If you don't worship this leader, sorry, you can't buy or sell anything.

That's different. But here, why are they telling people to take a vaccine for COVID, for example? Because it is spreading so freely. Why do they tell people, for example, to wear a mask? I mean, whenever I go out, I take a mask and wear it.

I obey the law. There's a reason for it. It's not asking me to submit to some authority somewhere.

It's saying we don't want you, if you happen to have a little bit of that infection and you don't know it, we don't want you to accidentally spread it to others. And maybe that guy walking by the road has it and we don't want that to pass on to you because then the disease will spread. So the motive behind such a law is to prevent the spread of a particular pandemic.

Because, you know, there was a, I've heard there was a pandemic years ago, which destroyed one third of the world's population. And even about 100 years ago, there was a pandemic that destroyed millions of people in Europe. So, and now this one also has killed numerous people around the world.

In fact, in many countries, the length of a man's life is being shortened because of this. So medical authorities are saying, let's take every possible means that you don't spread this disease to others. Now, if you're going to sit locked up in your house with your own family and never go out, you don't have to take a vaccine or do anything because you're not contacting other people.

You're not, but we must love others as we love ourselves. You don't want to get sick. You don't want to pass on sickness to others.

And very often you can get something without knowing it. We can get an infection without knowing it till much later. You can have this COVID virus without knowing it till much later.

I mean, I've heard of people like that, believers who discovered later that they got this COVID virus because they went out in the mall or somewhere and exposed themselves, discovered later. So, and during that period, they can pass it on to others. So the purpose of this rule on vaccine is, for example, you travel.

We don't want you to get inside a plane. And if you have this infection, you refuse to take the vaccine. You pass it on to all the others in the plane.

So they can make a rule saying, we will not allow you to board this plane, not because of some law, not because they're controlling your life, because they don't want you to infect other people. I think that's a sensible rule. So we have to see the reason behind it.

Whereas in Revelation 13, it's speaking about, take the mark of the beast because you got to bow down to me. I'm the authority here, the spirit of the antichrist. So it's very different.

Very often, you know, we have a narrow minded understanding of certain things. We need to see the real motive and reason behind something before we take a stubborn stand on something, which is not necessarily a Christian attitude. Consideration for others is a very, very Christian attitude.

Love your neighbor as yourself. If you, just like, you know, if you have chickenpox in the family, very often parents will keep the other children protected from this child that has got it because they don't want to get it or some infectious sickness. If one of your children has got a very highly infectious sickness, you will isolate that child from the other children.

Why do you do that? It's out of love for the other children. So consideration for other people is one reason why they tell you to wear a mask or children go to school. They say very often diseases are spread in school.

And you say, if you don't vaccinate yourself, we don't want you to an unvaccinated person to come here and pass on the infection to all the others. So there's a reason behind it. Let's use our common sense and not be, you know, stubborn and have a narrow outlook on this.

I think we can move on to a different topic. Thank you. That was very good.

In fact, somebody has commented that in their church, nobody wore the mask and everybody in the church ended up getting the virus. How does God give spiritual gifts according to his desire, or is it according to our desire? And are there specific spiritual gifts that we should seek for based on, or how do we find out what spiritual gifts God would want us to have or that we should ask for? Okay. The Holy Spirit comes to give us fruit and gifts.

The fruit is mentioned in Galatians 5, 22, 23. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control. And that can be expanded.

That is for everybody. Every single believer must have all those fruit of the spirit. The ground on which it grows is humility.

That's why humility is not mentioned there. That's the ground on which all the fruit grows. So that we must all have.

The gifts of the spirit are specific ministries or functions God gives different members of his family to serve. To use an example, the church is called the body of Christ. There's one thing that must flow in every part of this body.

That is blood. Any part of the body where the blood doesn't flow dies. The life of Christ, that is the fruit of the spirit, must go to every part, every member in the body of Christ.

But the gifts are like the hand. Every part of the body is not a hand. Everything is not an eye.

There's a mention in 1 Corinthians 12. There it says God gives this to one person, this to another person. When it comes to the fruit, it doesn't say God gives love to one person and joy to another person and peace to another person.

No, that's for everyone. But when it comes to the gifts, and he uses the example in 1 Corinthians 12, the eyes and the hand and the ears and the feet, different functions of the body. All are needed and one cooperates with the other.

And there are things to not mention in 1 Corinthians 12, like the heart, the kidney, the liver, unseen members of the body who are very, very important for filling a function that's not visible. There are others like me who are more visible. There are people behind me who pray for me, who are invisible, who are like the heart and the internal organs that keep the body alive.

So don't be disturbed if you're not a visible member. The kidneys and the liver are more important than the eyes and the ear. So that is gifts.

And then God determines what gift you should have. You cannot say, I want to have the gift of healing, or I want to have the gift of teaching. I want to preach like so and so.

You can't say that. You can follow a person's life, but you can't seek for his gift. God decides that.

But there's one gift we are all told to seek. That's 1 Corinthians 14, verse 1. It says, pursue after love and earnestly seek for the gift of prophecy. And prophecy in the New Testament is very different from prophecy in the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, prophecy was predicting the future. The Old Testament prophets not only predicted the future, they also called people to repent. All the prophets did not predict the future.

John the Baptist, the greatest prophet, he didn't predict future about anything. His main message was repent. And all the prophets said one message, repent, repent, even in the Old Testament.

So 1 Corinthians, but the New Testament prophecy is defined in 1 Corinthians 14, verse 3, as speaking to people to build them up, to challenge them, to comfort them. That is New Testament prophecy. Building up, challenging, comforting.

That all of us can do. Even a sister, when you're speaking to somebody on the phone, you can say a word to encourage them or challenge them, lift up their spirit. That's prophecy.

If you do it in the name of Jesus and through the power of the Holy Spirit, or when you're writing an email to somebody, why not add one sentence, a word of encouragement? Very easy. Many people neglect to do that. Seek for that.

Lord, please give me the gift of, instead of calling it by the spiritual word prophecy, which can give you high thoughts about yourself. No, let me break it down. Like it says in 1 Corinthians 14, 3, prophecy is encouraging people, challenging people, building up people.

So define it like that and say, Lord, I want to seek for the gift of encouraging people. I want to seek for the gift of challenging people to come up higher. Come up higher means forgive that man.

If that man is evil towards you, forgive him, come up higher. That's challenging people or building them up, strengthening them with some word from God that will build them up. So when you take the word prophecy and break it down and say, I want to encourage people, I want to challenge them to a higher life, and I want to build them up.

Don't we do that with our children? That is prophecy. And every one of us should seek for that. Every father and mother should seek to encourage, challenge, and build up their children.

All of us must seek to encourage, challenge, and build up others. Every one of you can challenge and build up younger ones who are younger to you. All sisters can prophesy.

Yeah. On a related note, what guidance would you give? Many times we hear Christians arguing even about Bible translations, and there are good translations and bad ones. And even I know it's not something we want to focus on, cause divisions over.

However, what guidance would you give on how to know whether a translation is good, how to use paraphrases, and how to use Bible commentaries? Okay. It's very interesting that God in His sovereignty did not allow the original writings to be preserved. The original Gospel of Matthew written by Matthew, nowhere to be found.

Or John's Gospel, or Paul's letters, not one of them have been found. All that has been found are copies made by people. It's from the copies that the various Bible translations like King James Version and New American Standard Bible and many, many translations have come up.

I ask myself, why did God not allow these original copies to be found? Because there are many other original documents of other things going back even before the time of Christ, which have been found. So

why didn't God allow first century documents to remain? Because I feel people would have worshipped those documents. Oh, this is the original document of Paul, let's preserve it and worship it.

You know, there are some religions where they worship a book. So God didn't want that. And also, the Bible is a means by which we hear God.

He doesn't want us to be stuck in the letter, which is just printer's ink. And so when we come to the translation, we don't know Greek, which is in which the New Testament was written, or Hebrew, in which the Old Testament was written. But people who know those languages, thankfully, have spent many hours and years, some of them lost their lives, translating the Bible into the English language or your own language.

And we thank God for them. And they are honest. Some people say this is a literal translation, like King James Version, New American Standard Bible, are literal translations.

Then there are other paraphrases, like a living Bible and a message Bible. They are paraphrased. Paraphrase means it's not an exact translation, but they try to get not word for word, but thought for thought.

That's a paraphrase. That means the paraphraser has used his own words to explain what he thinks is the meaning. It's like a commentary more than a translation.

There's nothing wrong in reading them, because sometimes they give you some light on it, on some passage. But I will not base a doctrine on a paraphrase. For a doctrine, I would look for a translation, the exact words of Scripture.

And my early Christian life, I used the King James Version because it is the only well known Bible available. I'm talking about 1959. And then later on, I now use the New American Standard Bible, which is also a translation, but in modern language.

King James Version has got 17th century English. And there are some words there that we don't use today. For example, love is described as charity.

It says pursue after charity. Today charity means giving to the poor. So is that what I'm supposed to pursue? So there are words like that.

And the King James Version is that language, and that's why I avoid it. It's a good translation. But that mistake is not there in a 20th century translation like the New American Standard.

That's why I use it, because it's English that I can understand in today's language. It's like, you know, there are different versions of English, 17th century English, 20th century English. It's just like Hindi or Tamil or Chinese or something like that, which I don't understand.

So we try to read a Bible, which is in our own language. And some people have got to hang up on King James Version is the only right version. I don't agree with that.

I personally have found I've used the New American Standard for nearly 40 years, at least 45 years, and I found it very, very good. And I also use a paraphrase to see sometimes if it gives me a deeper meaning into something which I probably missed when I read in the translation itself. But then I look at it like a commentary, not a translation.

I wouldn't base a doctrine on a paraphrase. If we could talk about the church, local church. It's a topic that's dear to my own heart.

But there's a number of people here, I think, as I look at where they're from, and even some of the comments who are from places where there isn't a local church, or they're going to some church and they're dissatisfied with not only the teaching, but just the spiritual growth and being in those churches. What advice would you give to people who are like that? Also, what advice would you give to people who maybe they come in touch with other believers, and there's two or three families or individuals that are meeting? What should they—what pitfalls they should watch out for, as well as how can they open themselves up for the Lord to establish a pure testimony for His name's sake, whether it eventually becomes a local church or not there? Ultimately, the only reason you should leave a church is because you feel they're not following God's word and disobeying God's word, or where you feel that God is leading you to something more. That's how I went from one type of church when I was first converted.

I was born into a Syrian Orthodox church, baptized as a baby. Then I was born again when I was 19 and a half, and I looked for a believer's church, and then I went to a church where they did not believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, so I had to move out from there. And like that, I went to different little fellowships, and as I found in Scripture more and more.

So the reason why we move from one fellowship to another should be because you find that you're not getting enough here for your life. Why does a child go from first standard or first grade to second standard or second grade? You don't want our children to sit forever in first standard, and from second standard, they go to third standard. From school, they go to college.

It's because we want to learn more and more. So if you find, but if there is no college in your village, what to do? So in the same way, if there is no local church that can lead you higher, then you can't find one. You must be satisfied with what you have, but you can still walk in your own, walk with the Lord.

You can go beyond what your church is leading to, but you must also pray that the Lord will bring you in touch with other people. This is what we did. Bring you in touch with some people in your area who want a godly life.

That's what we did, you know, in the beginning when we started the first CFC Church in 1975, August. It was I and another brother together. We prayed, fasted, sought God, and said, Lord, we want to see something more than this Baptist church we're attending.

And we prayed together, and we finally, three or four of us started meeting together. We were not perfect, and many things we did not know, but we tried to come around God's word, meet in simplicity, seeking to live a godly life. That was our goal, and to encourage one another.

It says in Hebrews, encourage one another daily, Hebrews chapter 3, lest you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. So we had to encourage one another daily, so we thought we could do that. And gradually, God formed us into a local church, as many people came and went, came and went, came and went.

And our prayer always was, the two or three of us who were meeting together or committed, Lord, if there's anybody in this locality who's looking for a godly life, please bring us in touch with that person. Either I meet them in the store or in the bank or somewhere else, or they reach out to me through some

contact, help us to meet with them. We don't want to meet everybody who just wants to go to hell.

We're not gathering people who want to go to heaven, rather. We're not gathering people who want to go to heaven. We want to gather people who are looking for a godly life.

Everybody wants to go to heaven. There are 1,300 million people in India. I assure you, every one of them want to go to heaven.

But among the 1,300 million people in India, how many want to follow a godly life and follow Jesus on earth? Less than 1%, 0.1% or less. So I say, Lord, I want to look for those. And there's an expression in English called looking for a needle in a haystack.

A haystack is a big pile of hay, and if there are five or ten needles inside it, how are you going to find it? It's like something lost. This big pile of hay, four or five needles, and the Lord gave me that picture. Looking for those who want to be disciples of Jesus in the midst of 1,300 million people in India is like looking for a few needles in a big haystack.

Don't go diving into that haystack searching for them. You'll never find them. Build a very powerful magnet outside the haystack, very powerful.

Those needles will come out and attach themselves to the magnet one by one without any effort. That's the picture the Lord gave me. Build a church.

Of course, the Lord would build it. He uses men and women to do it. That is strong on holiness, genuine holiness, thoughts, particularly the two big sins that Jesus spoke about in Matthew chapter 5. You know, in the Sermon on the Mount, by the way, there are two sins with Jesus that will take you to hell.

The word hell is mentioned only twice in the Sermon on the Mount. Very important. One sin is anger, and the other sin is sexual lust.

So Jesus told me, major on these two sins, anger and sexual lust. Most human beings are slaves in these areas, and that's why Jesus spoke about hell in relation to anger and sexual lust. Anger is the first of three steps to hell.

You read that in Matthew 5, 21 onwards. Lust can take you to hell. You read that in Matthew 5, 27 onwards.

And those are the only two sins that are referred to that can send you to hell. So if you've heard my preaching, you'll find that I major on these two sins frequently. But I've also seen very, very few preachers major on these two sins.

Go to the internet and see how many people speak on these two sins, on overcoming dirty thoughts, overcoming anger in the home. My goal was, I'll tell you honestly, I used to be defeated by anger in my early married life. Honest truth.

I was defeated by dirty thoughts 50 years ago. I said, Lord, I want to overcome these, not because I want to escape hell, but because I want to please you. And I said, Lord, I'm going to pay any price for it.

I'm willing to seek you for it. My goal was anger that in my home, 365 days of the year, I will never raise my voice at my wife even once. Never get angry no matter what happens.

365 days of the year and 366 days in the leap year. I said, Lord, this is my goal. I didn't get there overnight.

But I fought it, fought it, and fought it. I never was satisfied if I slipped up even once. And the same way in thoughts.

I said, Lord, I'm not satisfied with that. I don't look at a woman to lust. That's not enough.

I don't want to, even when I'm sitting alone, I don't want to lust in my thoughts. I don't want such thoughts to come into my mind. And like other young men, I was defeated in the early days, but I battled it, battled it, battled it, and said, Lord, I don't care how long it takes.

I want to be like Jesus who never had a dirty thought and who never got angry except where it concerned the glory of God. And the Lord taught me, the Bible says, Ephesians 4, 26, be angry, but don't sin. So I said, where should I be angry? I must be angry where Jesus was angry.

He was angry where the glory of God was concerned, where people were making money in the temple. And I'm angry when I see Christians making money in the name of Christianity. I preach against it in anger.

If I see a television preacher trying to get people money, I'm angry at him. I don't sit and watch that and pray for him. I don't pray for him.

I pray against him, the person who's trying to make money in the name of Christ, because I'm angry. But when they spat on Jesus and called him the devil, he forgave them. And I say, Lord, I never want to be angry where it concerns me.

Let them spit on me, call me the devil. People have called me the devil. I will love them.

But where it concerns the glory of God, where it concerns the purity of the church, I'm going to be very, very strong. And I don't care if people think I'm very strong in my preaching against that. So that's where, if you are seeking that type of godly life, pray that God will bring you in touch with some others who are seeking for that same life in your locality.

So once we found some in our locality, then we said, Lord, now in all of India, are there people in India who are seeking for this godly life? We made the circle a little bigger. Bring us in touch with those people. And then the Bible says, go into all the world and preach the gospel.

Lord, lead us to other countries. And we never thought we'd reach the world. But today, God gave us the Internet.

And we have a number of brothers who are technically minded in Bangalore who run our Internet from CFC India. And we reach about 180 countries in the world now with our message. So pray and say, Lord, bring us in touch.

It won't happen overnight. It's taken us 45 years to be where we are. Little by little, if you're patient and you're upright and you don't try to do it all yourself.

Seek for fellowship, at least with one other brother whom you consider your equal and work with him. And God will, Jesus will build a body because he's interested in every part of the world. We've seen it in our

life.

Along those same lines, as we seek to build a local expression of the body of Christ, pure testimony, you talked about life as being the important thing. In addition to that, are there certain other standards that should be a requirement for being a part of the church? Let's say somebody is responsible for arranging the meeting. A number of other churches, I think some people may be in on this meeting to come from backgrounds where a number of other things are used as a requirement for membership, like head covering or, you know, a particular belief system.

What are the things that, in addition to the life, which is the focus, should be, or are there other things that should be held as a standard in the convention? Primarily, I would say, you must have asked Jesus to become Lord of your life. And what we did was we preached the conditions of discipleship mentioned in Luke 14, verse 26 onwards, verse 26, 27, and 33, particularly. Love Jesus more than your family members, number one, your brother, sister, wife, children.

That's what we preach from day one. Secondly, love Jesus more than yourself. Die to yourself every day, take up the cross.

And third, love Jesus more than your possessions. Those are the three things mentioned in Luke 14, 26 to 33. So that was the basis.

And then the next thing we concentrated on was the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, 6, and 7. We said, if you want to build a church on a rock, which will be completely unshaken by flood or storm or anything, Jesus said, listen to these words of mine. So we preached Matthew 5, 6, and 7. We took detailed studies on it. So it was Luke 14, 25 to 34, and Matthew 5, 6, and 7 that we concentrated in on the early days, a real overcoming life.

And we saw Hebrews 12, verse 1 and 2, that Jesus is our example. Looking unto Jesus who was tempted exactly like us and did not sin. So in those days, I remember as a young 35-year-old, I was tempted in my mind.

I would say, Lord Jesus, when you were a young man in Nazareth, you were also tempted exactly like I'm being tempted now to a dirty thought. What did you do? I want to do the same thing. And I said, Lord, show me.

I want to react to this thought the way you reacted as a young man in Nazareth. Or in your ministry, what was your attitude to money when people wanted to give you money? I want to have the same attitude to money when I preach that you had. And I've tried to preserve that till today in all these 50 years of ministry.

So keep Jesus as your example. And if you always acknowledge, I have not yet become like Christ. And I say that openly.

I have not yet become like Christ in any area. Sin is like an onion. You peel off one layer, there's another layer underneath.

You peel off that layer, you think you're finished with the love of money? No. You'll find another deeper level of the love of money. So I've been peeling off, peeling off, peeling off the love of money for my life.

And the onion is becoming thinner and thinner and thinner. Till one day I'll become like Jesus completely. In the same way, in every area, say, Lord, you're my example.

That's primary. But yet, when we come together as a church, we need to follow the things that Jesus said. If you're born again, you must be baptized.

And even though that's just an outward action, since Jesus commanded it, and in the last commission, he said, make disciples and baptize them. So we insist on baptizing them, immersing them, which is a symbol of burial. And we do not allow a person to be a member of our church if he's not willing to be baptized.

I see you can come and attend the meetings, but we believe that you must obey God in baptism. That's the primary thing that we do insist on. And then we say that in the meetings you mentioned covering the head, we believe 1 Corinthians chapter 11 says that sisters should veil their heads when they pray or share the word.

So if a sister is testifying in our church, we ask her to veil her head. But if a sister is only attending our church and she does not have that conviction, I say you can attend our church all your life. We will not force you to veil your head if you don't have that conviction.

But if you're going to pray openly or you want to share a word, please veil your head because that is our conviction here. We don't force you, but I say it's a courtesy. We are convinced about it.

That is God's plan. It's like, you know, you go into some homes where they take off their shoes at the door. Now in our home in Bangalore, we don't tell people to take off their shoes.

I see you can come right in unless they're really dirty. We don't have a law like that. But if I go to a home where they have the rule, take off your shoes, I don't make a thing.

Hey, in my home, we don't take our shoes. I'm not going to take it off here. That's stupid.

At a matter of courtesy, I would take off my shoes. So I say you go to a church, sisters, where they all veil their head. Why can't you veil your head as a matter of respect and courtesy for that church? I said do it like that.

But if you're still stubborn and you won't veil your head, you're welcome to sit here. But in our church, we will not allow you to pray publicly or to share a testimony if you don't veil your head. So we're not legalistic in the sense of forcing people, but we have some convictions.

And we know what to emphasize. Baptism, we emphasize that you can't be a member without it. And veiling the head, we don't.

So it's different, different things. But we do preach uprightness and money matters and things like that. And we also insist one thing, owe no man anything, Romans 13, verse 8. Don't owe anybody anything.

It doesn't mean don't borrow. There may be situations where you suddenly have to borrow because you don't have the money. But if you do borrow, the command there is not don't borrow.

The command is don't owe anybody anything, which means if you have borrowed, return it as soon as possible. So if you're not planning to return it as soon as possible, you're disobeying God's word. It's one of the things we emphasize.

We cannot check up whether people are doing it, but we preach on it. Yeah. I'll ask one more question.

And then I think we're running your voice hoarse, Dad. No, as long as I have a glass of water, I'm OK. And this is related to the previous question also, but maybe another topic in itself, but as much detail as you want to go into.

And that is, some churches also say that if a person is divorced and remarried, they cannot be a member of the church. At a high level, maybe as much detail as you want to go into, what is your position on how to deal with, somebody asked this actually, is the adultery that Jesus talked about in lusting with the eyes that sends a person to hell the same as the adultery that Jesus said is when a man divorces his wife and marries another? And what do we do with church membership in those situations? Divorce that Jesus spoke about, the adultery Jesus spoke about is physical adultery, unfaithfulness to the marriage vow. And we are very strong on what Jesus taught about divorce and remarriage.

It's very clear in Matthew chapter 5, what Jesus said, that divorce is just not permitted. Everyone who divorces his wife, Matthew 5, 32, except for fornication, makes her commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

It's very clear. And that is our position as a church. When people write to us from different places saying, what shall we do? We say, listen, we cannot tell you on email how to deal with your divorce situation because we need to talk to both parties.

We need to spend time to talk to this party and that party and find out the truth. Otherwise, one party will give us a prejudiced version. So we never counsel people long distance on the internet on divorce matters.

We say, if you're a part of our local church, we'll advise you. Otherwise, we cannot. But in our local church, we're very clear.

We are against divorce. Where if somebody wants to divorce, I say, please leave our church, go somewhere else and do what you like. But you cannot divorce and come back to this church.

Now, you and you certainly, if you are divorced, you cannot be married again. But what about a person who's already divorced when they come to us in the days of ignorance? The Bible says, the times of ignorance God overlooks, Acts 17, verse 30. The times of ignorance God overlooks, but now he commands all people to repent.

So we say, Acts 17, verse 30, if they were ignorant, okay, we can't hold them responsible. If they have repented now, and here's a divorced and remarried couple. In their unconverted days, perhaps, they divorced, remarried, they did not know.

And after that, they are born again. And I asked this question, has God accepted them? Has Christ received them? And I say, to the best of my knowledge, it seems as if Christ, they did sin in the past, but Christ has received them. And if Christ has received them, how can I reject them? I'm not holier than Christ.

The church is the body of Christ. So I received them. But the Bible says that an elder must have only one wife.

So we do not give such a person any spiritual responsibility in the church. You see, we cannot allow you to get up and preach. You can come and be a member of the church and fellowship with people and give your testimony, but we cannot allow you to teach or preach, no matter how gifted you are, if you are divorced.

You can be a member in this church because we believe that you did it in the days of ignorance and you're born again now. Maybe both husband and wife were divorced in their unconverted days or in the days of ignorance, and then God married and came. So that's the position we take.

But again, we deal with each case individually. And we don't make a law for the other churches. But I say, this is how we have followed it, and we found it works, that we are strict where it concerns divorce, but we are merciful when we deal with people who did it in the days of ignorance and come to us.

But we do not give them any responsibility in the church, not even to teach a Sunday school class of children. But they can do all types of practical things in many other ways. Yeah, thanks, Dad.

There are quite a few more questions. Maybe we can save those for another time. And we made a note of the questions if you've asked them, so we'll try to get those answers.

I know somebody asked about related to divorce, about abusive situations. And so we won't get into the specifics of that. Those are, there's personal counseling that's available.

But I appreciate the clarity and the upholding of the standard of God's word regarding divorce as a general, in general. I think in all of these teachings, we'll find that there are people harp on the exceptions or the corner cases. But if you need help in any specific situation, you're welcome to write to CFC or write to us at ROCF.

And hopefully there are elders in your area who can talk with you and guide you specifically in that situation. Do you want to add anything to that, Dad, before I? Yes, I just want to say that some things that we practice in our church, we cannot make a law for other people. There are certain principles that are very clear.

Very often in these difficult situations, we seek for personal counseling. Without that, otherwise some person can take one thing and apply it in some other situation, may not apply. And above all, I say mercy is a very important aspect of the Christian life.

Many Christian leaders are totally unmerciful. I tell our own elders, I said, if that person is your own son, who's that member of your church, would you treat him like that? Treat every, what I tell my fellow elders, if you are to be like a father to those men and women in your church, treat those men like your sons, treat those women like your daughters. And if they make a mistake, ask yourself, what would you do if your son made that mistake? What would you do if your son or daughter did that thing? Treat them like that.

Sometimes you may have to be strict, but also coupled with mercy. I will say this in closing. When Jesus got up in the synagogue in Nazareth, you read in Luke chapter four, he said, the spirit of the Lord has anointed me to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.

That's Luke 4, 18 and 19. That's a quotation from Isaiah 61, where it says in verse two, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God. Jesus left out the second part because the day of vengeance has not yet come, the day of judgment.

So I see Isaiah 61 too as saying favor and vengeance. That's God's strictness and God's mercy. And God's mercy and his favor is for 365 days, favorable year, judgment one day.

So I learned something there, that my dealing with people, I must be strict. There must be a day of judgment, but also a full year of mercy. So in other words, my attitude to people must be 365 days of mercy and one day of judgment.

In proportion, the mercy in my life must be 365 times more than my strictness and my judgment. That is the balance. It's not equal.

Mercy and judgment are not equal. The goodness and the severity of God are not equal. The goodness of God is 365 times more than his severity.

And if you've got that balance, you're right. Don't make the severity zero. Some churches, there's no zero severity.

They're not like God. And some churches have got 365 days of severity and one day of mercy. That's also wrong.

It's completely out of proportion. But this is the balance. It's an answer in scripture to everything.

I have found in all types of situations, if you know where to look, the answer is there. That is why I say, study the Bible. I have been studying the Bible for 60 years and I'm still discovering new things in it.

But what I did in the first seven years of my Christian life was I concentrated on thorough study of the scriptures because Jesus knew the scriptures by the age of 12. And I presume he started studying around the age of five. That's where I got the leading, that Jesus would go to the synagogue and ask the rabbi, can you please open the scroll and read something for me? The rabbi said, sure.

And Jesus would remember that. Remember, there was no printed Bible those days. He'd go home, meditate on it.

Next day, he would come to the rabbi, say, can you please go to the next section? That's how he went every day to the synagogue for seven years. And by the time he was 12 years old, he could confound the priests in the temple. He knew more than them.

And I said, Lord, you were like me. In seven years, I must know the Bible too. That's why from the age of 19 to the age of 26, I concentrated on the study of the Bible.

And I'd write my notes all over here, there, everywhere. And I got to know the scriptures thoroughly. And that's been the foundation of my life.

But I'm still learning, still learning. As I still study the Bible even now. Study the scriptures, dear brothers and sisters.

And be strict with yourself, but be merciful to others. God bless you all. We hope to have more global Zoom meetings.

And if you are subscribed to the Word for the Week, it's a free subscription. You write to CSC India, you can get Word for the Week. Every week is a message that I send out.

And that will intimate when we have... We try to have it once every month at least. God bless you all.
Thank you for speaking at such length, three hours.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/QzSdy9Rfv1o.mp4>

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