

# Question Time

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[ 0 : 00 ] All right, so on the fifth Sundays, our plan going forward as has often been the practice is to do Q&A;, and all of these questions have been sent in in advance, so 18 questions came through, which is quite a lot, and I've tried to curate them and take some of them and mold them with other questions so that we could at least address a bit of every one of them, and we've added a little bit of time shorting the service a little bit to try to do that, so we have, we're down to 11 now, and we may or may not get to all of them, we'll see.

So we're going to try to keep things three to four minutes apiece so that we can hopefully tackle them all. So we're going to alternate as well and how, and starting?

By alternating, we mean if I can't answer that, I'll just pass it on, I could. That's the idea. No, no, not at all. All right, so the first one is for me to start on, and somebody asked, I think this is the easiest question in the whole group, so I'll put it first.

It's a really important question. The question, oh, they're on the screen, okay, I didn't realize that. Why is it that we observe little grammar there? Why is it that we observe morally superior non-Christians?

All right, so let me restate it in a different way. Why is it that in normal experience as a Christian, you have often seen very clearly that there are people who are not believers that are at the most simple level nicer than you are, or kinder, or at a more grand level, there can be Christians who are truly believers that have major public sin, while there are non-Christians living next to them that live very virtuous lives by all measure?

[ 1 : 46 ] Okay, how do we account for that? I think the question is asking, how do we account for that theologically? And the answer's rather simple. I'll try to be very brief with it, and that's the doctrine of common grace.

So the doctrine of common grace says that even after the fall, God was pleased to continue to give good gifts to human beings and the world and the animals and all sorts of creation, all of creation, no matter what they believe in, right?

And so God's common grace is his gift of love, that he loves everything he's made, and he expresses that love by continuing at the most basic level to preserve life.

So if you've ever drawn one single breath of oxygen, no matter what you believe in, you're a recipient of God's common grace. And that's for everybody. If you've ever stood underneath the sunshine, you're a recipient of God's common grace.

If you've ever eaten a good meal, that's God's common grace. If you've ever listened to good music, that's God's common grace. How is it that people who are not Christians can be more virtuous outwardly than Christians sometimes?

[ 2 : 56 ] God's common grace. God gives the gift of what we call technically civic righteousness, the capability of being morally righteous in a way that is not meritorious or anything like that.

It doesn't please God entirely because it doesn't have subjectively in terms of the heart and orientation of believing in the Lord. Yet on the outside, it's virtue.

And so God gives human beings the capability of that. He also takes it away. I think there's a question coming later about that actually. How can you know when God has taken away the possibility of repentance?

Well, common grace is connected to that. Romans 1, that God can withdraw common grace, and you can see that very clearly expressed in moral devolution and becoming more and more and more corrupt.

That's a withdrawal of common grace. So common grace is not universal. It's not, you don't get it by necessity. It's God's pleasure to give it. And so he gives it to Christians and non-Christians alike

and our ability to obey the law and the good food we eat in all sorts of ways.

[ 4 : 03 ] Do you want to add anything to that? Does that mean it's okay for Christians to be rubbish and allow non-Christians to be better than them?

No. Well, you know, Paul, Romans 6, 7, 5, 6, and 7, you know, ask that question. Some Romans must have been saying, can I keep on sinning?

And that would make more of God's glory if I get to keep sinning as much as I want, and then God keeps getting to pour His grace on me. And Paul says that's foolishness, right?

So, no. Yeah, absolutely. And I think as well, it's important sometimes to recognize that the motives that people have for being morally superior, and I don't mean that they're not morally superior.

They may outwardly look that will not be Christ honoring because they don't love Christ, and if they don't love Christ, then their morality is therefore either to try and make them better than other people or to try and justify their own lives, their own existence.

[ 5 : 17 ] And so, their motive isn't to love Christ and to love others in the way that grace allows us to. But that doesn't, I don't think, excuse Christians from not seeking to be morally pure and upright.

Yeah. Yeah, I mean, there's a huge difference in civic righteousness and good works or righteousness. And the latter, which is only for a Christian, requires a changed heart, you know, without... there has to be subjective and objective agreement there.

All right. Number two, yeah? Yep, number two. Number two. Is it a sin to not respect someone? And then these are two different questions, but I just stuck them together.

Can you respect someone when you disagree with their lifestyle, their understanding of ethics, all that sort of stuff? Yes, it is a sin to not respect other people, I think, because it's part of the counter-intuitive Christian life that we're called to live.

What's happening today is that you only respect people that are like you. You only respect people that agree with you. You only respect people that are part of your identity. And you disrespect everyone that thinks differently and everyone that acts differently or has different morality than you.

[ 6 : 40 ] But I think as Christians, we have a great opportunity to live and to show a different kind of worldview and a different kind of lifestyle by respecting everyone that we come across because we're all made in God's image.

And we recognize that fundamental basic reality. It's one of the most important realities of the Christian faith that has given society is the equality of everyone, race, color, creed, sexuality, whatever it happens to be, all made in God's image.

I think especially as Christians, because we understand that we are sinners, saved by grace. God didn't choose us because we were better or more moral or more upright, but He chose us because He chose us and He loves us.

And there is no merit in His choice. So we would be lost and damned as much as anyone else without the grace of God. I think the example of Christ, the way He treated people who were different from Him is very powerful.

I think there's a powerful word in 1 Corinthians 5 where Paul talks to the church there and says, I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people, but it's not a tall meaning, sexually immoral of this world or the greedy or the swindlers or the idolaters.

[ 8 : 02 ] Since then, you would need to go out of the world. But I'm writing to you not to associate with those who are brothers or Christians who are outwardly sexual immoral and not living a graceful life.

So I think there's a really clear message there about how we treat other people. And I think it's, we can also respectfully, I think this is another area of this import, we can respectfully disagree with people.

It's not about being a doormat, it's not about saying to everyone, hey, it's okay, however you go, that's fine, that's your choice, you live the way you want to live. It's not like that, but it's even in our disagreement, even in our truth telling, we do it respectfully and we do it lovingly.

Jesus said, love your enemies, love those who persecute you. So we're called to do that and that's one of the great challenges, not to be divisive and not to be those who identify as Christians but we don't therefore not identify with others because we recognize that common humanity we share.

Yeah, I just had one verse, I thought of 1 Peter 2.17, which I love how he addresses every, all sorts of classes of individuals in this statement. He says, show proper respect to everyone, love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

[ 9 : 26 ] And so there's your proof text, show proper respect to everyone. Good. Yeah. And okay, Corey mentioned, number three, Corey mentioned in his sermon on Sunday about how the widows are given a special role in the church and this is in 1 Timothy 3, what passage five, and mentioned that it was like a deacons role in nature.

Why is it that we only have males who are deacons? And then a second question that was in the ballpark is outside of marriage in the church, how would you say the role quality of men and women should be different?

Okay, well, this is where we get into the hard things, harder questions to answer in brief. Yes, so I do think that in 1 Timothy 5, there is clarity there as well as an ax in a couple of their places about what we saw as a role of widows, widows who had been registered by the church in Ephesus to take on particular ministry.

They had been set apart by the elders to take on particular ministry. One of the tricky things is that in the Bible, the word for deacon is sometimes a specific word of office and sometimes a very general word.

And so the word deacon, diaconos, diaconon just means servant. So it gets used all over the place to describe all sorts of people, people who we know were not deacons and office, but were servants, right?

[ 10 : 56 ] And so the way I was using it on Sunday was to refer to how these women were very clearly set apart to do the role of service in the life of the church.

Now all I want to do to address the question, to keep it brief, is just give you a couple arguments for why both why males have been restricted, I should say, the office of deacon has been restricted to males in the history of the Reformed church and the Catholic church that goes back beyond that. And then just kind of wear some of the text star that people debate about and just ask you to be a Berean and go think about this yourself, but then I'll just take two minutes on this.

Okay, so obviously one of the most famous places is First Timothy 3 where we get two offices listed, elder and deacon, and there's a disputed point in the list about deacons where it says clearly of elders that there are to be men that have one wife.

And when you come to the section on deacons down around verse 15 or so, I think it says, and it can be translated either and their wives are to be reputable dot, dot, dot, and it lists the virtues of the wives of deacons, but there's no word in that verse for their what their so it's often translated and their wives so it can either be and the wives of the deacons or and the women ought to be dot, dot, dot.

[ 12 : 36 ] And so people have debated a lot whether that that is referring to both male and female deacons and in Ephesus and what to do with that, but the majority position, the position of the church since the Reformation has been that it was restrictive to mail a mail office.

And one of the reasons for that as well is when you go to act six, you see the initiation of the first deacons, the proto deacons as they're often called, seven men are chosen to be the first deacons. But what we also see very clearly, I think in both early church and in the Bible is that women were always set apart alongside the deacons to be in registered ministry.

Okay, so not just in a general way, but in a more specific way than that those women were chosen. And I think Timothy Paul goes through that list of how you could become one of these women, this role of widows and Ephesus, for example, in 1st Timothy five.

We try to honor that here, that reality by having a women's pastoral team that works alongside both the elders and deacons that takes on these roles.

[ 13 : 52 ] So that's a very general answer that jumps around a little bit. Do you want to say anything? No, no. You don't? Okay. Thanks.

That's a good answer. Yeah. Well, let me admit that I didn't really answer the question. Because what the question is asking is, can you prove from the Bible a theology of ordination that is exclusively for men?

And I can, we can't do that here, but I can refer you to the sermon I preached on 1st Timothy two as a good starting point for that. Yeah.

But if you did ask that question, or if you're interested in more, please, please come and see me afterwards, I'd love to talk more about it. But let me just say that we do very much recognize the necessity of setting apart women for specific ministry and look at, we have vehicles here for doing that.

And our elders, you know, think about that and approve those women for ministry to serve alongside the men. So, additionally, this one's probably harder than the first.

[15:03] Not a marriage in the church, how would you say the role of qualities of men and women should be different? Okay. I'm also not really going to answer this, but what I want to do is say that one of the reasons that this question has to be asked is because of the failures of the church the last 70 years in appropriating what is largely American post-World War II economies, work economies, and thinking that that is the norm throughout world history.

So the post-World War II economy, the household economy, is that men, you know, in the 1950s, you've seen it on all the TV, they leave the house, they go to work, the women stay home, the women don't work, that sort of mentality.

The Bible has no time for that, none. It doesn't, it's apples and oranges. You can't find anything like that in Scripture, and that is a modernist way of thinking.

And the reason I'm not going to answer it is all I want to do is instead point you in the direction of what the Bible does with male and female, a male and female economy, economy meaning how they live life in the world, Monday to Friday, right, which again doesn't make sense to a pre-modern person.

Monday to Friday is nothing, it's not a thing in the pre-modern world. And that's this, a couple places, Proverbs 31. Proverbs 31 is one of the best helps that we can have for seeing how apples and oranges, this question is to a modern person and a pre-modern person.

[16:41] What do you see in Proverbs 31? You see a woman, a wife, who is the primary economic breadwinner in Proverbs 31.

She's the one that's going out to market. She's the one that's going out to the harbor and looking at a ship and saying, this is a nice ship, I'm going to buy it, I'm going to buy these goods and take them to market.

And the husband in that text is a man who is sitting at the city gate as a judge. So he's some type of official in the city, judges would sit at city gates to determine whether or not immigrants would be allowed through the city gate, for example.

But the reason that it's apples and oranges and that Proverbs 31 plays this out very clearly is because there's no such thing as a person who, quote, stays home and doesn't work or something like that in the ancient world, in the ancient Eurystian, the Greco-Roman world.

And that's because the entire economy was always committed to a household economy. Everybody in the household did the same thing together to bring the goods to market, whatever that was.

[17:48] And there was a head of family, a husband was the head of the family, but underneath him, everybody in a household was much bigger than just husband, wife, and children. It would include all sorts of people.

There was no places to go and work. There was no getting up early in the morning and getting dressed and leaving. Everything happened as a part of the household economy. And so when you try to do Bible reading in order to discern, well, what jobs can men do?

What jobs can women do? What are all sorts of questions that the church does in the contemporary world? It's apples to oranges to the biblical world. It doesn't work out at all because the biblical world is a world of household economies, not workplaces.

There aren't such a thing as workplaces in the biblical world. So I'm not answering the question. I'm helping us understand the contextual difference.

And I'm going to leave it at that. Do you want to say anything? He's talking about fruit there, apples and oranges. I think, yeah, absolutely. I was actually going to bring up Proverbs 31. It's a very powerful chapter.

[18:54] Entrepreneurial women of great resource. Some of the core women of the New Testament were clearly rich.

Business women who helped support the church. So again, yeah, I don't really see.

We come with such baggage from our world, I guess, but yeah, the role is open. And we seek to support and encourage that in any way we can.

Yeah. Number four, another good question, hard question. How do you know if it's too late for you to repent like Esau in Hebrews 12, 17?

Okay, so Hebrews 12, 17 is referring back to Esau and his loss of the birthright to his brother.

[ 19 : 51 ] And it says, see that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected for he found no chance to repent though he sought it with tears.

And I guess there are people who have read that and thought, man, that's a disaster. There's someone who wanted to repent, but he wasn't able to.

And that has caused a lot of people real heartache and potentially the person who asked the question, real heartache, if you look at the question, you know, is it too late for you to repent? And I think the question, the passage itself helps us to understand a little bit. And there's also questions about what is being spoken of here and what he sought with tears.

What was it that he sought with tears? Was it repentance or was it the blessing? And I think many commentators would say that the reason that he was crying, because if you go back to the original passage, you see that he was tearful and weeping because he pleaded with his father to get a blessing, to get the blessing, the birthright.

[ 21 : 03 ] And he wasn't able to get it because it had been given out to his brother. And so the it that he sought here in this passage is probably not repentance, but probably was the birthright.

So he did lose out on the birthright. And that's for sure, even though he wept over it, he didn't receive the birthright. But as for repentance, I think, though he sought it, he found no chance to repent.

And I think that's really probably referring to the fact that was the then, you know, could he have done anything to get the birthright back, to change things, to change the way he'd behaved and to gain the birthright.

And no, there was nothing he could do. So there's nothing he couldn't change his mind, he couldn't change the past, couldn't put the clock back, he couldn't get the blessing. So there was no opportunity for him to get that.

And I think that's really what it means. I think it could also, you could also look at 2 Corinthians 5-10, I think which may be Germain a little bit too, the whole kind of idea.

[ 22 : 10 ] Is that the right? 2 Corinthians 5. Carry on, talk among yourselves for a minute.

I did have it there and I lost it. Anyway, forget about that. You just, you can look at, I'll send you something with that at home.

It's the passage that speaks about the difference between godly sorrow and worldly regret. And I think that also could be opposite in speaking about Esau because we're told in Hebrews that he was godless and immoral.

So it's likely that rather than repentance, he was remorseful for sorry for himself and not truly repentant.

I think we can safely say, clearly say that anyone who truly seeks the Lord in repentance will find the Lord.

[ 23 : 18 ] Repent and believe, you and your household will be saved. There's no instance in the Bible of anyone who truly repented, who was rejected and turned away.

So I think we need to look at the character of Esau. We need to look at what the scripture says about his character and how he responded to the loss of the blessing.

And it was really a loss of privilege, a loss of wealth and a loss of position that he sought to gain tearfully again rather than a relationship with the Lord.

Yeah. I would just add that I think if you're asking the question for yourself, then the answer is that it is not too late.

The fact you're asking the question is a good sign always. All right. Number five, a couple of questions here about the book of Romans.

[ 24 : 13 ] I think these will be quick. What especially is Paul referring to in Romans 8.18 when he says, in reference to our present sufferings, being incomparable, quote, with the glory that will be revealed in us?

What does that future glory look like and why does Paul say it will be revealed in us? And then there's a second question here as well about Romans five that's very close to this, the first one. What does quote we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God mean? I think I can answer both of them just by answering one of them. Romans 8.18 says, for I consider the sufferings of the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us or in us.

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. Verse 19, that's important. On the one hand, I think it's very simple here that he's talking about a post-resurrection life.

So the glory that is to be revealed in us is only to be found in the life that is resurrection with Christ. Here comes again and in the second coming, the creation, the present sufferings of this current order of creation are not worth comparing with the glory of the resurrection life that is to be revealed in the coming of Jesus Christ.

[ 25 : 34 ] So that's the simplest way of talking about it, but the questioner is asking the in us, the glory that's going to be revealed in us. You could say, okay, well, that's the resurrection life itself.

The resurrection life will be revealed in me, but I do think there's something more there. And I think that that's what the questioner was probably asking. The next verse says, the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God, which have to be revealed in resurrection.

But I believe Paul here is going back to his creation theology and in creation, Adam and Eve were made to be rulers of the land of the world.

They are given the task to be both priests of creation, priests primary job is to worship and royal stewards of creation to be the kings of creation above all other creatures.

I think that in the second coming of Christ, part of what the everlasting life, eternal life means is that human beings will once again take their place as rulers of creation in a way that Adam and Eve were meant to be if they would have obeyed the commands of God.

[ 26 : 56 ] And we get that very clearly in Paul. Paul tells us that we are already seated on a throne with Jesus Christ, that Christ is the king of creation, the king of new creation, and that he has named to us brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of God, the father who is king of creation.

And he speaks of our inheritance. It's the language of a royal son, a royal daughter receiving their right to the land, to rule, to have the possessions of the land.

And so I believe that this text is, of course, talking about the resurrection life, but even more than that, it's talking about the life of dominion that the human being will take hold of in new creation.

We have a very strange text, like 1 Corinthians 6-3, that if you don't have a theology like this, then I don't think you can make sense of, and that's, humans shall judge angels.

In the next, in the new creation, human beings will judge the angels. The word judge there doesn't mean like a judiciary, like giving a punishment.

[ 28 : 07 ] Judge is a word for rulership. They will rule over, meaning that in the new creation, God will put humans in the place he wants them, where he intended Adam and Eve to be, and that says the true royal stewards of creation underneath Christ the king.

So that's what I take it to mean. Romans 5, we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. The hope that is the glory of God is the hope of the revealing of the Son, Christ, as the revelation of God's glory in the world, his second coming.

Same thing there. Yeah. No, that's good. Okay, great. Number six, we're moving right along. I think we can finish. Which spiritual lesson, this one gets away from the really tough things, I think you just asked something helpful.

Your spiritual lesson that you have had to learn has helped you the most in your Christian walk. And then what three books outside the Bible have most shaped you?

Okay, just to go back to the last question, it was 2 Corinthians 7. I was looking at 2 Corinthians 5. 2 Corinthians 7 verse 10 is, For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation.

[ 29 : 19 ] Without regret, there is worldly grief produces death. Okay, that was what I was looking for. So these are really, they're very difficult questions because it's very hard to pinpoint or to shrink down everything into one sentence.

What spiritual lesson have you most, you had learned to help? I think, I don't quite know what that means.

I think that my experiences in life have led me to appreciate that God never leaves me. That's probably one of the biggest things.

He is faithful even when I am not and when I have not been. And sometimes I don't see that at the time, but I look back and I see it.

It's a great thing to look back in your Christian life because you see things much more clearly that way. My insight is a great thing for us as Christians because we often, it's often as we look back, we see that God has never left us even though we felt that we were alone and even that He's been

faithful when we've been not.

[ 30 : 31 ] The other thing is, I think, patience, learning patience because the older I've got, the less I know and the less I realize I know and the more I focus on what I do know or what is revealed.

And I don't worry so much about the stuff I don't know because I trust Jesus that He knows. And that's a great relief and that's a great release for me that I don't need to know all the time.

And He has always guided me through, even when it's stuff I don't like. So I think patience and His faithfulness. Books, really difficult because I find books are things very much for seasons.

So they're seasons of life when one book means more to you than another. And because those of you who know of me know me well, I'm not a great reader, I try and read people more than I read books.

And that's just the way I am, although I read a lot for my profession, of course. But if I were to choose three books, it would be A Faith to Live By by Donald MacLeod, which kind of summarised the lectures that he gave when I was in the Free Church College as it was then, which has consistently been a significant and important book, theologically grounding my life and my faith and even my ministry.

[ 32 : 08 ] Second book would be How People Change by Trip and Lane or Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands. Two books that have been hugely influential in recognising and applying biblical truth to every situation in my life, which I think I've found very helpful.

And kind of pastorally, probably the best. I don't mean that, that sounds very, I'm only reading for the sake of the work. But in my own life as well in terms of understanding suffering, I think when God weeps by Joni Erickson-Tarra, it's an immensely powerful book about suffering from someone who knows a lot about suffering.

So these would be certainly three very significant books. The first question for me is pretty much, I was going to say the same thing that you said. I think the realisation more and more that as it used to be said that we all stand quorum dayo before the face of God at all times.

So about the truth that God sees me and every single one of us here tonight all the time and sees you all the way to the bottom, all the way to the deepest parts of your heart and says son, daughter at the same time.

And if there was a second subordinate one for me, a truth is just Heather actually mentioned this to say something about this today, but just waking up to the idea from time to time that I am completely unnecessary, contingent.

[ 33 : 45 ] Well Heather said that to you. Yeah, that's true. That's true, what do you think? She was to be fair to her, she was referring to this truth in her own life.

She was speaking theologically. Yeah, exactly. But it is true for all of us. We're unnecessary, we're contingent beings.

We don't need to exist and God doesn't need us, not at all. So those are the two for me. So three books, I don't know, is really the answer.

I would be lying if I didn't say bobbins reform dogmatics, it has to be said. Augustine's Confessions, I think, I don't know if I have a third that I can say just clearly Calvin's Institutes would be another for me.

But yeah, all right, let's move on. Okay, this is a tough one. Someone also asked a question about, question seven about side B Christianity.

[ 34 : 53 ] Yeah, and so the question or ultimately ends up asking the question, when does temptation become sin? The reason they're asking the question is because they asked a previous, they reflected briefly in it on what's called side B Christianity.

At first I wasn't going to say a word about side B Christianity, but I think Derek thought it would be helpful too. I will, side B Christianity is an idea in largely, largely a you that you see in the US, but there are some theologians elsewhere that also emphasize side B Christianity.

Side B Christianity says three things. Okay, it says one that same sex relationships are sinful, like a traditional Christian ethic.

And that a person who is same sex attracted needs to be committed to chastity, to living a chaste life in the midst of that. Number two, that the sin in same sex relationships only happens not at the level of desire, but at action.

Okay, so that's the caveat inside B Christianity. And the third thing would be that because of the call to living a chaste life, it's necessary to seek what's been called spiritual friendships, which are

serious committed spiritual relationships with the same, with a person of the same sex.

[ 36 : 25 ] That is of course not sexual in any way. So that's a basic overview of what's called side B. There's lots of reasons that is called side B. There's a side A. I won't get into all the differences right now.

Can I just ask very quickly, how hands up people have heard of side B Christianity? I'll say four, five, six. Okay, interesting. Yeah, so side B, this is a very significant debate in the United States right now, very significant.

The General Assemblies of many of the churches will meet in the next month or so to discuss this as they have been for the past couple of years. So that's what's behind this because inside B Christianity, it has an idea that temptation is not sinful, that desire is not necessarily sinful, but that what is sin is only when sin happens when you act.

And I think when you look at the theology of Christianity from all the way back to the Bible to Paul and Ford, that that can't be the case, that desires that are out of accord with God's moral law are sinful even as desire.

And so when does temptation become sin? Well, there's a couple places in scripture where we see someone tempted but not sinning like Jesus.

[ 37 : 54 ] So there's an argument there, well, look, you can be tempted and not be sinful at all. But here's the difference. The Bible nuances between two types of temptation, objective temptation and subjective.

Objective temptation is temptation on the outside of you, a circumstance, one that you didn't create, like when Satan comes to tempt Jesus, that's an outward temptation.

An inward temptation is when you have a desire to sin inside of you. Jesus had objective temptation, never subjective temptation.

But we all have subjective temptation as well as objective temptation. A subjective temptation is sin. It's an expression of sinfulness. It's part of a fallen nature.

When we want bad things, even if we don't act on them, it's still part of our sinfulness. And so that's basic Christian teaching really for the last 2000 years.

[ 38 : 52 ] Yeah, so anything? No, I think it's a really difficult question. It's very difficult. Yeah, and it's difficult debate.

Yeah. Yeah, I would need to think more about that. I think we should go on to the last two questions because we've... Because of time is short.

Okay. Yeah, that's fine. So it would be 10 and 11. Okay. So a couple of you were having a skit.

We're sorry about that. 10 and 11, what is the purpose of a sermon in communal worship?

And what do I do if I don't get the point of the sermon? If you don't get the point of the sermon, just sack the minister. And... Or, no, don't do that.

But if you don't get the point of the sermon, do ask the minister. Do ask whoever's preaching. I think that's really important. So now you might have to go away, both from your point of view and from, for example, Minor Corey's point of view.

[ 39 : 53 ] I was thinking, oh, we've got across a great message there today and everyone goes out not having a clue what you've talked about from that kind of point of view. It's very important if you don't understand something that you say or if you don't get the reasoning or if you think it was wrong in terms of understanding Scripture that you talk about that, that's very important.

Because you should understand the sermon. It's very important to understand the preaching of the word. The preaching of the word is critical to us. We believe that's what God commands the church to do is to...

There's a kind of semi-technical phrase for preaching that is given to those who are commissioned by the church or deigned, chosen by the church and by God and with that authority of being leaders and teachers, preachers and teachers, as we saw this morning when we were looking at Timothy. It's to be something that we regard as significant. It's not just a homily in a kind of take it or leave it in a way. It's the authority of God.

So I've said this quite a lot over the years here. You're involved in the sermon as much as I am or a chore because you need to be receiving it. You need to be acting on it.

[ 41 : 14 ] You need to be drawing it out. You need to be saying, what is God telling me today?

What am I being asked to obey, to follow, to serve, to change, to repent, to be encouraged by, to be uplifted?

Every one of us should go out of a sermon changed and we all play part in that. It's proclamation of truth. The teaching of truth, it's the invitation of the gospel to come to faith and it's the pattern that we're given in the New Testament church.

I think for us here, we look for the Sunday morning sermon, the Sunday sermons particularly to be inspired. I hope we aim them to be challenging, inspiring and motivational in the best sense of that word in a scriptural and spiritual way.

We want it to be a highlight of your... Obviously a highlight of your week, that sounds a bit...

Spiritually, I mean, this time together, it should be our highlight, spiritually, worshiping God and hearing from Him.

And we should be hiding behind the word. It's not about us. It's about Jesus and the Word. And we kind of hide behind... That's why it's much easier for a preacher to preach than to give...

[ 42 : 37 ] Than to be an emcee at a wedding or to give a speech at something where it's just about himself. Preaching, you're hiding, you're hiding behind the lectern, but you're hiding behind the Word.

You're coming under the... You're coming under the authority of the Word just as much as anyone else. And I think that has that communal purpose for us every week and it's counter-cultural again. Yeah, I'll just mention, I think we're saying very complimentary things here. Just put it in the most controversial way. I don't really think that sermons exist for us to remember what was said all that much because most often, and I have done this with our trainees that we have and that are candidates for ministry, I'll ask them, what did the preacher say yesterday?

And these guys are all in seminary, so you think they're probably taking notes and stuff, but it's very rare that they can actually restate the points from yesterday's sermon, which is really interesting.

So I say that to just simply say, the content of a sermon is very important. It's got to be biblically faithful and addressing the current issues of the day.

[ 43 : 57 ] But at the same time, I think sermons are moments like you're saying where the Holy Spirit comes and meets with us in a unique way and affections get stirred in such a way that you don't realize you're being changed, but over the years you are being changed.

And you're not going to remember most of the time on such and such days, so and so made this point about Scripture, about this verse, whatever. Sometimes you do, but most of the time you don't.

I don't. Do you? No. No? Okay. I don't remember why I preached. Yeah, I don't either. I can't remember what I preached on either, so that's what I'm saying. But that's why we say that the preaching moment is the proclamation of the Word of God, the Holy Spirit promises to come and bless it.

And so the Spirit works on us even when we can't say two days later what it was about, you're being changed actually in little ways over time in a way that you don't know it.

So it's an experience of the affections, I think, more than the mind. But last one? Last one. We talk a lot about how when God looks at the believer, he sees only the finished work of his son.

[ 45 : 13 ] But in the Bible, God still chastises believers for their sin. Does God still see sin in believers? Does God still see sin in a believer?

Yes and no, is the answer, I think. But the no has to be first.

And the no is that Paul teaches us very clearly that if you believe in Jesus Christ tonight, that you are what he calls in Christ.

And we call that union with Christ. And when he talks about our union with Christ, he puts it all in the past tense. He'll say, you have died with Jesus.

You have been raised with Jesus. You were buried with Jesus. You have been resurrected with Jesus. You sit on a throne with Jesus. So he uses past tense language to describe your condition in Christ.

[ 46 : 17 ] And that is so serious that what he means is that when Jesus went to the cross, if you're a believer, you died that day. And so the reason that one day you will stand before God and he will say, I see no sin in you is because on the day of Christ's death, you were so united to Jesus Christ that you died on the cross with Christ.

Christ died with you, you and him, he and you. Then and there, that's union with Christ. So that means that legally and by the spirit, we often say mystically or by the spirit, you were so united to Jesus that God sees no sin in you.

Because your sins already been crucified and actually Neil DM at General Assembly last week gave a great illustration of this reality. He was talking about something different, but he talked about how a lawyer will stand in front of the person that they're defending so that the judge cannot see the person.

I think he said he does that. That's union with Christ that God tries to, when God, the judge stands and looks, he sees the advocates, not you.

You're so in Christ that he sees Jesus. So legally you're innocent. But because we live in the now and not yet, we still live in this body of corruption with sinful passions.

[ 47 : 39 ] And so like a good father, legally sin free, actually lived life full of sin. So Luther said you're justified and you're also a sinner at the same time.

And so like a good parent, God punishes and love his children at times in different ways, chastises like a parent who's disciplining a child who's still living in sin.

But I'll stop talking and let you talk. But with this phrase, I think the best way to sum this up is what Paul preaches is, Christian, become who you are in Christ.

To live life in accordance with what you actually are. You are sinless in Christ Jesus legally. So live your life in Christ.

Let that be on display. Fight for holiness because you are holy legally. So become what you are. I think that's a way of summarizing Paul's teaching on this. Oh, good.

[ 48 : 44 ] No, that's good. Okay. All right. Well, we had to skip a couple. So sorry about that. If yours got skipped, we'd love to chat with you at the end. If there's anything tonight as well that you want some clarity on, you were frustrated by, that's okay.

We welcome that very much. One of the things is I'm shooting from the hip a little bit. So probably said some things that I'll listen back to and think we could have said that better differently.

But please do come talk. And also this is always available. We always want to get together. We always want to talk about the things of God. So let me pray. Or do you want to say something?

No. Okay. Let me pray. Father, we give thanks for this time. We give thanks for Sunday nights. And we pray for our church and the people who are here tonight that you would bless them.

May the words that have been spoken be true and where they're not. May we be like Bereans and be able to discern the differences. And like Derek preached this morning, Lord, give us hearts that would confront one another and be happy to talk but not gossip.

[ 49 : 54 ] And so we do ask for that spirit amongst the body, Lord, that we would always be searching, always be hungry for the knowledge of the things that you've revealed to us. Open our eyes to see what was and we pray.

In Christ's name. Amen.