

Further Answers to Questions

Sermon July 19, 2020

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Quick Note: If you like these Q&A's, both live and in written form, and would be willing to help us categorize them by topic for our website, please let me know by emailing me at ryanj@cfcjax.com. This can easily be done from the comfort of your locked-down home.

1. Is it possible Hagar despised Sarai and ran away because of the baby?
According to the culture, the baby will belong to Sarai and Abram not her.

Gen 16:6 records, "But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your maid is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight." So Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence."

This reveals she had not chosen to leave until she was treated harshly by Sarai, implying it was the change of treatment that led her to flee. It doesn't appear her desire to keep the child was a factor.

2. There is a lot of talk that the "mask mandate" is more of a form of social conditioning. What is CFC's view on this and how should Christ followers respond/prepare for increasing cultural shifts against the church?

I have heard some of these concerns as well. First, CFC does not have an official view on this subject. So, I will give my personal opinion for whatever it's worth. The mask mandate is definitely setting a social conditioning of some kind, whether intentional or not.

On one hand, we need to remember parts of the world by in large mandated masks to some degree during the Spanish Flu in 1918 as well. You can find many pictures of mass crowds wearing masks in those days. Many scientists and medical personnel are convinced wearing masks slows the spread of COVID and if all people wore masks, the pandemic can be quelled.

On another hand we must also understand there is a growing movement by social Marxists in America these days. Are they behind the mask mandate in any arena? Possibly. But God's Word tells us how to fact check in Deuteronomy 19:15-20, which includes multiple eyewitnesses and cross-examination, all practices even our secular courts use when determining truth in matters. Until we have such evidence, we must be careful not to jump to hard conclusions about ideas such as this.

Personally, I do not think it is an intentional scheme by any human towards some deviant purpose. Again, I do not see such evidence as mentioned above. And I do not believe most politicians, if not all, are intentionally trying to shut down churches. Are some being inconsistent by allowing unmasked protestors to gather while telling churches they cannot meet without masks and in some cases, not allowed to sing either, absolutely and woefully yes. But foolishness on some politicians' part does not automatically equate deviant scheming.

Wearing a mask is not in and of itself wrong according to Scripture. Therefore, if our government mandates it, we must obey according to Romans 13. If we disagree with this "law of the land", then we can vote against such measures in the next election opportunity. We are also allowed in the US to protest wearing masks in various "holy" forms until then, while wearing masks of course. ☺

3. I'm a member of a church (almost 26 years), and I truly love this body of believers. But 3 other members do not like our pastor. They have managed to make his life miserable for months. This week things came to a head and they succeeded to run him off. He and his family are devastated!!! Two precious children are involved.
Please pray for us.
Also, HOW do I pray? I don't want to stay at a church where PEOPLE are head of the church, rather than Christ, who died for it. Please give me your opinion and any scripture you might want to share.

I am very sorry to hear of this situation within your church. The pain comes through in your writing. It is times like these we can understand more deeply the joy of looking forward to Heaven where we will be in complete unity and perfect love for one another.

Proverb 18:17 God tells us *"The one who states his case first seems right until the other comes and examines him."* God is saying we must hear both sides of a conflict before being able to rightly judge or discern what is right and wrong. I am not able to hear the "other side" in this situation, so must be careful to draw conclusions. What I can do is give some overall biblical principles you can apply.

First, do you believe you have fact-checked this situation well? Have you listened to the 3 members' points of view? I know this can be hard when you've already come to a conclusion, but if you haven't, God's Word tells us we should hear both sides, not just in the Proverb quoted above, but also Deuteronomy 19. If you do meet with them, I suggest do so one-on-one, in humility, not in an accusatory way, and ask questions about what they perceive happened, what they did to respond, and why they did what they did. In the end, you will either find your presuppositions warranted, or you may find some information that may cause you to second guess your original conclusions.

If you do determine wrongs were made by the 3 members after talking with them yourself, then in love you should call them to repent to God and the pastor they have sinned against. If they do not, then you can walk the Matthew 18:15-20 path of conflict resolution. Read this passage for those steps. One step not implicitly in this process, probably because the office of Elder was not installed yet when Jesus gave it, is to eventually include the Elders of your church at some point after you've tried multiple times with multiple people to ask these members to repent and reconcile. The Elders should be willing to step in and listen and help as they believe the Spirit leads them.

As you'll notice, I haven't talked about leaving your church yet. That is because leaving one's church should be the last option after trying these biblical steps towards reconciliation. Leaving a church should be a very weighty decision, just like joining a church should be on the front end. All too often American Christians get up and leave churches way too quickly and skip these hard but necessary steps to possibly reconcile and preserve unity, leaving too many church splits in the wake that could have possibly been avoided.

But, sometimes even after all these attempts to reconcile, reconciliation is not possible because someone is not willing to own and repent of their sin, thus hindering reconciliation. If that ends up being the case in your situation, then ask the Lord if He wants you to remain in your church despite this wrong that was both done and not appropriately addressed, or if He is calling you to another church/flock. The Spirit will make it clear to you if you keep asking.

4. You said abram should have told sarai "thats not a good plan- we need to trust god." I immediately thought of adam and eve. that situation is unique because it was original sin but do you see adam's decision as being the same as abrams- not trusting?

Yes, it seems both Abram and Adam did not trust God in these two situations. A root of many sins is unbelief/lack of trust in God and His plans and words. This contrasts with Abram just the chapter earlier in 15:6 where Abram "...believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." Belief/trust is what God expects of us. May He help us today to trust Him in whatever we are faced with and may we bring Him much glory by our trust because He is worthy.

5. How do I deal with the thought that family members aren't believers?

Be Broken-Hearted

First, we must be deeply sorrowed at the thought. If God "takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked", neither should we. Especially, when we think of our very own family members who, if they died today, would go to Hell forever. It should grieve us terribly. Jesus wept over the spiritual lostness of the whole city of Jerusalem in Luke 19:41-44 because He loved them.

How could someone say they love somebody while believing if they die they will go to Hell and not have that weigh heavily on their heart? Either they do not really believe in Hell or they do not really love their friend/family member. It definitely sounds like you truly care for your family members and believe Hell awaits them if they die in their sins. That is the first necessary attitude.

Pray

Then, out of that deep concern, God invites us to pray. James 5:16b tells us *the prayers of a righteous person can accomplish much*. Ask God to give your family members both the gifts of faith (Eph 2:8-9) and repentance (2 Timothy 2:25) so that they will come to Jesus for their salvation. Keep praying until the day they come to faith in Jesus.

Live the Gospel

Jesus told us in Matthew 5:16 *"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."* Jesus is saying as we love our unbelieving friends and family, God can use our acts of love to woo them to Himself so that in the end, they will also

"give glory to your Father", which could include they could give their life to Jesus because of seeing Jesus in our lives.

Share the Gospel

Coupled with living the Gospel (mentioned above) in front of our family members is sharing the Gospel with them. Listen to this statement carefully: nobody will become a Christian by watching Christians live the Gospel alone. Key word: alone. The Gospel is a message that must be spoken with words. As we are living the Gospel in front of unbelievers around us, serving and loving them well, we must also get to the point of sharing the Gospel message with them if they are ever going to possibly be saved. Be asking the Spirit to lead you as to when to do this. But remember, sometimes He just simply wants us to start that kind of conversation with people instead of waiting for them to ask us. Step out in faith and humility and first listen to their own beliefs and end by sharing the Gospel.

If you have already shared the Gospel with someone, sit on it in prayer, go back to living the Gospel and praying for their salvation and then circle back around at some later point by asking if they've had any further thoughts about your prior Gospel conversation. You may be surprised that they do. Or they say "no" and you can affirm your love for them and desire that they do come to Jesus someday and then move on back to living the Gospel and prayer. Keep doing such a cycle as long as necessary. Jesus didn't give up on us, but kept pursuing us. Let's do the same for those we love.

Rejoice in Your Own Salvation

As you think of your loved ones who have yet to come to Christ, you can also take each thought as a reminder to thank God for opening your own eyes to become a follower of Jesus. We never want to take our own salvation for granted. This is not an arrogant "thank you Lord that I'm not a heathen like so and so" prayer, but a humble, grateful "thank you Jesus for opening my eyes and dying for me, such a sinner that I am" kind of prayer. The Lord deserves such prayers every waking moment of every day.