

TCC Q&A

Questions & Answers

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Don Green. We really didn't plan the very start of this and so we're talking to each other coming up saying, "Okay, now how are we going to start this thing?" And so, Spencer, how are we going to start this thing?

Spencer. I guess we'll just start it by just starting to talk.

Don. Okay, that'll work. This is a talking kind of time.

Spencer. Right, it is.

Don. Do you mind if I get comfortable?

Spencer. No, go for it. So you've been out for a couple of Tuesdays. Your back...

Don. My back, oh, don't talk about my back.

Spencer. Right, so bad choice of words. Give us an update on how are you doing. The doctors give you the all clear? I mean, you're here on stage so that's a start.

Don. Yeah. I've learned something that I've kind of known in the past but if you want to start a conversation in the church as a pastor, just tell, let people know that you've got back issues and you'll have all kinds of people talking to you, offering you all the solutions and all of the cures that you could possibly want. Use heat. Use cold. Stretch it out. Stay in bed. All these things and so that's been interesting. Thank you for all of the caring input that you've all give to me. I appreciate it. I'm doing a lot better and I feel great right now.

Spencer. Good. Good. It's funny you mentioned your back, as I was preparing for this, I ran some things past Becky and every wise husband should do that, run things by your wife, and....

Don. Uh-oh, I didn't do that. This is bad.

Spencer. I was gonna try and make some joke about, you know, what was it like to feel older, you know? Something in relation to your back being hurt, and in God's wisdom I was doing some yard work yesterday and managed to hurt my back.

Don. Ah, sorry to hear that.

Spencer. So I'm really thankful for these padded seats.

Don. Yeah, well, all of you that offered me advice, here's Spencer. Go for it.

Spencer. So I'm sitting here, very humbly sitting here with also a sort of sore back. So I want to turn to something a little more serious and I just mentioned that you had very candidly and very openly shared with us about a suicide in your family, and it seemed that you had poured almost everything out to us there and how does grieving through that?

Don. For those of you that are maybe visiting or aren't aware of what he's talking about, there was a suicide in our family a week ago, 10 days ago. My mother's brother. It was a very sad situation and, you know, the family is still in a state of shock really trying to sort through what all of this, what all of it means. But what's been interesting to me and what I have really appreciated about our church is that many of you came to me and said, "Well, you know, I've had a suicide in my family. I've had two suicides in my family," which somebody told me that and I've had two in my family. It's made me think that maybe when I'm back on Tuesday in two weeks, I'm gonna be gone next Tuesday also, but I may do a special message on suicide, how to think about suicide, how to respond to it if it's happened in your family, and so I actually have a lot more to say than I can say right here, but there's a pastoral dimension to this within our church that I think would be good to address and so I'm looking forward to that. I was working on that message today even, and so that's the plan as it stands right now. We'll see if I actually do it or not.

Spencer. We look forward to hearing about that. So I wanted to also mention something that's very close to most of us, is this thing called Covid. I don't know if you've heard about it, but it's requiring us to wear masks and it's really changing life for most of us. Many of us are working from home. Previously for a long time we weren't actually meeting here to worship, you were live streaming and just speaking to a fairly empty room. So do you think this is the new norm for us here at Truth? Is dealing with masks and dealing with the additional hygiene that comes with Covid?

Don. In a societal way, it seems to be kind of open-ended and I'm concerned that we're never going to go back, and that these plastic shields that places like Kroger are using are going to become a permanent part of the landscape. Let me be very precise in what I'm saying here. I'm concerned about the long-term effect of masks from a relational standpoint. It puts a barrier between people. I'm talking long-term if this was to go on for many more months. I'm not concerned about people wearing masks today or anything like that, but if masks became an integrated part of how our society functions going forward, I don't like the barrier that that puts between people. So I'm kind of concerned

about that just in a social sense. You know, here at Truth Community Church, you know, we're trying to gradually in a way that everybody's comfortable with get back to normal, giving people the freedom and the support to wear masks if they want to, getting our operations, getting our ministry, better stated, back to normal and that's what, you know, I'm looking forward to seeing that progress more in the days to come. We opened our nursery a couple of weeks ago. That's going well. We're hoping to talk soon as elders about when our next Communion Service can be, things like that to get us back to that sense of normalcy that we knew six months ago.

Spencer. Do you think we'll continue to live stream the service into the fellowship halls as a result of some of those changes?

Don. Well, as long as there's a demand and people want that, we're happy to do that, in fact, it gives me an opportunity to say this. You know, I'm hoping, Spencer, that I know that we've had a number of people that have stayed away and haven't returned since we reopened and the elders have been very supportive of that, of people being able to make those decisions in their own way, in their own time, at their own comfort level. I'm hoping that soon more and more people that have stayed away will feel the comfort at least to come back and to be in the fellowship hall with the social distancing with their masks on if they want to do that, because I think we need to be at a point where we're at least back in the routine of getting up and going to church on Sunday morning and we're with other people, even if you come a little bit late and leave a little bit early, you know, and don't interact with someone. I miss the people that haven't been able to come and so I'm hoping that, you know, now that it's been six months, things are progressing like they are that people will feel a little more comfortable in coming back. You know, as elders we're more than content to be patient with people. It's just a pastoral desire to see as many people back as possible.

Spencer. So there's been a lot of writings about Covid as well and about the physical threats of Covid, can you put those in a broad context for us so we can kind of understand them not just what we hear on the news and sort of the panic that you see on Facebook, but just in a much more concise, you know,....

Don. Well, the thing that occurs to me is the common way of the media speaking about Covid is they're just giving raw numbers. There's 800 new cases in Kentucky, you know, over the past week or day or whatever it is, and 14 more deaths, and you just see these raw numbers and it just, there's no context to process them in an intelligent way. If you look at the numbers for the three states in our area, Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio, you look at the numbers in California, you look at the numbers broadly for the population of the United States, they're all pretty consistent in that at this point six months into the pandemic, approximately 1% of all of those different segments of population, 1% of the population has been diagnosed with Covid. That means 99% have not been, and that's just accepting at face value the diagnoses which there've been a lot of false positives. The testing is not at all conclusive. These numbers are suspect to begin with but taking the reported numbers at face value, 1% of the population has been diagnosed with Covid. Of those, if you follow and do the math, of the ones diagnosed 1% has died. That's one

person in 10,000 and I'm using the numbers loosely, you know, it might be a half percentage difference in some locations so I'm speaking in very round numbers just to make the point that you're talking about a 1 in 10,000 compared to the whole population that have died of Covid.

Now to give some context to that, according to National Geographic, your chances of being struck by lightning in the course of your lifetime, 1 in 3,000. Think about that. Since when have we ordered society around people getting struck by lightning, living in fear of being struck by lightning? Now I realize that, you know, the whole idea is, "Well, you know, you're gonna have these super-spreader events and it's highly contagious," and all of that but, look, at some point, at some point life has to go on, and what I think that we as Christians need to be mindful of is that we trust in a sovereign God. We believe in a sovereign God. We believe in a God that has appointed the length of our days and has appointed the days of our deaths, and whatever else society does, you know, I don't, you know, I pastorally, I'm concerned and I'm speaking far beyond the walls of Truth Community Church here of people embracing a lifestyle of fear that is based on numbers that are not given any context whatsoever. Here's a little bit more context. In the state of California, the rate of alcoholism in the population is 6% compared to these fractional percentages that we're talking about with Covid. There have been 12 times as many deaths by abortion as there have been by Covid comparing the year 2017 to the current rate. There are 90 times as many people with a gambling problem as reported by the state of California, 90 times as many people with a gambling problem as those that have died to Covid.

At some point you have to put these numbers in a context. We're not reordering society for these other things that are far more greatly spread about, then what are we doing? What is happening here? Why are we doing this if only 1% of the population has been infected with it and of that 1% only 1% of them has died from it and the other 99% have made recovery. And of the 1% that have died, it's disproportionately toward those who are elderly, those who had co-morbidities. After six months, this just starts to not add up very well and our church, and I myself, you know, when this first came out, we were very cooperative with the government. I was deferential to the health experts and what they were saying, but at some point whether you think it should be six months or nine months or whatever, at some point the numbers have to match the hysteria that has been generated by this or you need to start getting things back to normal. I'm speaking for myself, not our other elders here, but that's my perspective on it.

Spencer. Would you agree with me like Phil Johnson and say that those of us who are wearing masks during this time now towards the end of this six month span are living in fear and are not trusting in the Lord?

Don. Well, I haven't seen Phil say it just like that. I know he had a tweet that was somewhat controversial. I know Phil, I know he's pastoral in his intent, so I think there's a high likelihood that his tweet was misunderstood. But whatever, our approach as a church has been to leave the decisions about masks to the individual and to let each individual determine what's best for their family according to their risks, according to their comfort

level. We've gone out of our way to encourage and even instruct our church not to make masks an issue with each other. So I have no criticisms of anyone wearing masks and choosing to do that, I just think that it's important to put it more broadly in a social context that we're thinking about this beyond just raw numbers and we're putting this in a context of other social issues that are not causing society to be reordered, and also in the context of our trust and our confidence in the Lord's direction, the Lord's care for us, and just trusting him and rather than living in fear.

Jesus said, if you want to open your Bible, in Matthew 10, in Matthew 10 Jesus said in verse 28, he said, "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." And so the emphasis that Jesus gives to us is to look beyond fear over our physical lives and consider things in a spiritual context and make sure that we're living in response to the fear of God, and if we're living in the fear of God, ironically we're living in a spirit of trust in him. Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding." As a pastor, my concern is not about cloth on the face, my concern is about fear in the heart and people learning to replace that fear with trust and that's my concern, and part of the way that we help each other is to say, "Let's think about these things biblically. Let's put these things in a broader context that the media is not giving to us." And then that gives us a perspective from which to make our decisions. That's what I care about.

Spencer. Those are good things to care about. We've mentioned California a couple of times, by association we can't help but think about and talk about Grace Community Church and John MacArthur, and you've been uncharacteristically outspoken on Facebook defending John MacArthur, and I use that word "uncharacteristically" meaning your actions on Facebook and social media. But you've been defending John MacArthur and Grace Community Church, why take that kind of a stance?

Don. Yeah, you know, they're 2,000 miles away. It's not affecting us. It doesn't have any direct impact on our ministry here at Truth Community Church. You know, what's the purpose? Why am I doing that? You're right, I'll go delete them all. Huh, no, that's a joke. That's a joke. That's not Spencer's point.

Look, look, these guys at Grace Community Church, these guys are my friends and they've been my friends for 25 years and they are facing a real time of difficulty, and the men who have far greater prominence than I do who used to call themselves the friends of John MacArthur are staying silent. And I'm outraged by that and I've been outraged by it for a long time. I think it's a betrayal of a relationship that some of these men are not speaking up more. I want to be there for my friends at one level. The nature of ministry is that sooner or later you get a target on your back and, you know, I'd like to think that I'll have some friends when the target's coming around to me that'll speak up on my behalf as well. But beyond that and beyond my personal connection with Grace Community Church, is the men of Grace Community Church have been tremendous friends to our church, Truth Community Church. John MacArthur has spoken from this pulpit twice and another time by video link. Chris Hamilton, the elder Chairman at Grace Community

Church has spoken here multiple times. Phil Johnson has spoken here. Travis Allen has spoken here. Where's the integrity, I ask you, where's the integrity of receiving ministry from these men but not being there for them in their time of need, their time of conflict? Whatever small voice our church has, whatever small voice I have, I want to raise it up and speak on their behalf and to defend them and to support them. I think we owe that to them.

But even more than that, Spencer, if you want to turn in your Bibles to Psalm 15, Psalm 15, and I'll be preaching from this text in a while, several weeks again, but in Psalm 15, it's a text about the godly man and who the godly man is and what the godly man does. And you see it there in verse 1, "O LORD, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill?" Who has fellowship with God, in other words. And he goes through and he gives several different characteristics of personal character. I've preached on this Psalm many times and it always stands out to me in verse 4, the one who abides with God is the one, look at it there in the middle, "who honors those who fear the LORD," and in this situation, I see it as a direct application of Psalm 15 to speak up on behalf of my friends at Grace Community Church. I want to be on the right side of that verse and if you look across our country and you ask yourself, "Who over the past 50 years has proven that they are a man that honors the Lord, that fears the Lord, that serves the Lord," there is a very short list that can stand with John MacArthur on that time. And you don't have to agree with all of his theological positions, you don't have to agree with all of his biblical exposition to recognize that aspect about him, and it is incumbent upon godly men to support him and to stand with him in this time, and whatever else anyone else does, I want to be on the right side of Psalm 15.

Spencer. You used the phrase that, you know, the target comes back to you and the phrase I think paints the right picture in that John and Grace Community Church are a target now. What would Truth's stance be if we became the target, if the state of Ohio came back and said we can no longer meet and worship in person similarly to the way that California state rulings have been? What would our response be?

Don. Yeah, well, to give some context, a couple of things by way of context here. Context is everything. First of all, in Ohio I am grateful for the leadership of Governor Mike DeWine. Over the course of the past six months, his administration has been relatively sympathetic to places of worship. They have gone out of their ways to exempt places of worship based on First Amendment grounds from the early orders that they promulgated on this, and so we are in a much different position in the state of Ohio than they are in the state of California. I don't think that it's likely that we're going to face the same kind of oppressive measures that Grace Community Church is facing in California.

To give you some context. In California they have issued 14 pages of regulations specifically aimed at places of worship, telling them what they can and cannot do. Two of the most egregious examples are is that they have forbidden singing in indoor services, and in addition to that, the social distancing requirements that they have imposed says it's 25% of your room capacity or 100 people, whichever is less. And so if you were a church meeting in the equivalent of a sports arena, let's say, that had capacity of 10,000 people,

you could only have 100 people in there despite the expansive space that you have. At Grace Community Church, their worship center holds 2,800 people. This is madness. This is madness but I'll tell you what else is mad here is the fact that so many people, you know, I think this is a pivotal moment in the life of the church broadly speaking and in the life of our country.

One of the things that comes up a lot and that leaders have said and that a lot of people on social media say, they'll say something like this, "Well, you guys can still meet, you just have to meet outdoors. So what's the problem here? You can still meet or you can have different kinds of meetings, or you can meet at home," and people will egregiously quote out of context Jesus' words, "Where two or three people meet, there I am gathered in your midst." "And so you don't even need to meet in person and other churches are complying with this, why can't you? What's your problem?" Well, I'll tell you what the problem is, the problem is people that are thinking like that. I want to speak through my computer screen and evoke the memory of R. C. Sproul, "What is wrong with you people? What is wrong with you people that are saying things like this?" Don't you understand that you are letting the government determine the form of your worship? That you are letting the government tell you what you can and cannot do as a church? Who is Lord here? And even if you want to submit to the government like that, on what basis do you tell us, do you tell me as a pastor that I ought to be satisfied with what satisfies you? This is insanity for people to think this way. The mindset is, if it's good enough for me, then it ought to be good enough for you. That's not acceptable. That's not at all acceptable. The only authority in a local church that determines what is acceptable is their leadership, and an outside entity, especially the government, should not be telling a local church what to do with their worship, and once you have accepted, once you've established that you'll accept government instructions on how you will worship and the form of your worship and you'll comply with not singing, for example, and all these other things, the camel already has his nose in the tent, and once you've established that, you've sacrificed your independence. And don't think for a moment that these Democratic administrations haven't taken note of how churches are willing to be compliant to them and the future demands will be far more intrusive in days to come, and that's why we have to take a stand on this now. That's why I'm thankful to Grace Community Church, and there are other churches in California that are standing also, it's not just Grace Community Church. These are the minority of men who understand what's at stake here and we who are elsewhere in the country, we need to stand with them because what happens in California is gonna come to us eventually too, and we need to establish the principle that we will determine what's acceptable within the walls of our church. What we will do in worship belongs to the prerogative of the local church, not for the government to set for us. And to me that is just so painfully obvious that I'm genuinely concerned about the mental condition of people that can't see it.

Spencer. Amen.

Don. Thank you for that applause, that one of you. But let me just say, let me just say this. I'm adamant about it and I'm speaking with just a modicum of hyperbole because this is the ballgame here. This is the ballgame. If we accept government regulation of

churches and government regulation of our worship, we might as well stop doing what we're doing because the endgame of that, the logical outcome of that is far more than meeting outdoors and not singing, eventually it becomes the government telling you what you can and cannot teach, and once you've established that you'll let the government regulate yourself, I'm speaking to these churches that are yielding to it, once you establish that you'll yield to that, don't think that you'll get the courage coat on when the more restrictive things come. You've already said you'll roll over and that's why can't roll over here, and that's why I am so animated about supporting my friends at Grace Community Church and I thank God for them, for the stand that they're taking. They are putting themselves at risk. The church is at risk. Grace Community Church is at risk with the stand that they're taking and they are gladly doing that and the people of God need to rally around them, not stand at a distance and watch it burn down.

Spencer. So knowing that and knowing that we should be taking a stance now, how should we who don't really have hardly any platform at all, how should we respond to that? How do we take a stand?

Don. Well, that's a great question and for the person in the pew, so to speak, to simply be faithful to pray for them, to be supportive, and to be supportive of your own local church and your own local pastor. I'm speaking not just about here but in generally speaking because I know other people are seeing this. To be faithful to your own local church, to be faithful to your own leadership, to support them, to encourage them. We talk about in our membership commitment to support your local church with your time, your resources, your talents, your prayers, you know, and to be faithful in the sphere that the Lord has given you, faithful in the church sphere that the Lord has given you. Let that principle guide you and support those who have, you know, maybe a little broader perspective or a little bit broader platform to be able to speak to it and stand with those that are standing for the freedom of the church. And it's not just a First Amendment issue to me, this is a biblical issue about the independence of the local church and the Lordship of Christ over the church. We are not at liberty to hand that over to pagan government officials to tell us what we will or will not do in our worship. If somebody comes and arrests me after saying these things, if you guys would just come and visit me in prison, you know, I'd appreciate that. That'd make me feel good.

Spencer. You've sort of taken to Facebook a little bit and made some social media posts to draw attention to this topic, should we be doing the same thing? Should we stage a peaceful protest? How do we take a stand?

Don. Look, my situation is a little bit unique because of my prior association with Grace Church and my depth of relationships. This is a battle that I need to fight. That doesn't mean that it's a battle for everybody else in this room. And so I just go back to the fact of encouraging people to be faithful here, being faithful to Truth Community Church. If the heart of Truth Community Church is right and the people of Truth Community Church are united and loving each other and faithfully attending, that kind of support at that level gives me a bit of freedom to be able to articulate things in that very minor modest

platform that the Lord's given me outside the walls of our church. I wouldn't even recommend that others try to do what I'm doing because it's not necessary.

Spencer. Okay. To stay here inside the room, you've given your thoughts on, you know, how should we fight this effectively and, you know, it's maybe not the right word, fighting the government, but I think you understand the, you know, the idea there but as we move forward, part of that faithfulness and just continue to come back and continue to worship in support you and our elders, how do we continue to live that out in our lives outside of these walls? So we go to work or maybe some of us work from home, but we're going to work each and every day, is that the place to have those conversations? Is that the place to bring up, you know, "Yeah, church should be over here. You know, this is where church should be and the government should be over there, right? This is our space."

Don. I wouldn't, I wouldn't go out looking to provoke that discussion with anyone. If it comes up, to talk about it in a natural calm way, in other words, in a completely different spirit than what I'm speaking about it here from the platform, but to just talk about it in a calm way and say, "I think there's another perspective here that's worth considering." You know, things are so polarized with the Presidential election coming, this gives me a good opportunity to clarify something. I'm under no delusions that I'm persuading people that disagree with me. The primary purpose of the posts that I make on Facebook are to support the people that I know personally and I know they need the encouragement of seeing an outside voice support them. I'm looking to strengthen the hand of my friends, not necessarily persuade opponents because for all intents and purposes, people have made up their minds about this and so I'm just trying to strengthen those who are in the midst of the battle from my position of relative peace here in Cincinnati.

Spencer. Here in Cincinnati, how do you think Truth is doing now? What do you think our present condition is..... as a church, as a church body? Sorry.

Don. I knew what you meant. I just thought a little bit, an awkward moment of silence would play with your mind a little bit.

Spencer. It did a little.

Don. Look, Truth Community Church as far as I know is in a really really good place and I mentioned this from the pulpit, I think I mentioned this from the pulpit on Sunday. We continually are having new people come to our church which is wonderful. It's a sign of life. To the best of my knowledge, there is a congregational unity that marks the life of this church that I'm very encouraged by. To put a tangible aspect to it that some with a business mind relate to, our giving has exceeded our projections. Even in the midst of all of this disruption, our giving has not only, not only has it not declined, it's actually increased beyond what we were expecting. We never talk about finances here. I don't, in one sense I don't care about finances at all. But you know, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also and people are showing by what they do with their personal

treasures that their hearts are with Truth Community Church and that's, you know, and that's very encouraging.

At an elder level, you know, our elders are united. We have an elder meeting tomorrow evening. Our elder meetings are just very enjoyable times together for all of us. It's because we're not arguing about things. We're not fighting about things. And unity in a church stems from unity in leadership and it kind of, you know, whether they're conscious of it or not, a congregation takes its cues from the unity of its leadership. And so there's just a whole host of things that encourage me about our church. Honestly, I would have to think long and hard to come up with things that are negative, you know, about any negative things. It's just not in my mind like that about our church so I'm grateful for what the Lord's done for us here, excited about what the future might hold for us.

There is an aspect about Truth Community Church that we're talking about as elders that we need to address. With all of the wonderful blessing that it is to have so many new people coming and to have our church growing and at the size that it is, we're very mindful, I'm very mindful that we're coming to a point where we need some more pastoral help because while at one sense things are going well, I'm concerned lest the sheer ratio of elders and leadership to people is such that we're not doing all that we can to provide pastoral care for people in the congregation. You know, there's just a limit to what our current leadership can do. We've reached a point where it's time to think about, you know, maybe we add somebody to staff or somebody like that, that can share in the pastoral care of the people. It's not enough for us to do our services on Sunday and Tuesday, people need pastoral care and there's just a limit to what we can do with the existing arrangements.

So that's something that I think we need to look at, you know, in the future what that might look like, you know, on the administrative side. Some of you may know, a lot of you may not know we've added a little bit of help. Joyce Collette is helping us with some administrative things and so if you get an email or a call from Joyce asking for something, she has permission to do that. "Who are you?" Well, so now we're grateful for Joyce and the help that she's providing behind the scenes and all of that. We just need to expand our capacity to care for people and that's probably the most significant next step for our church is to be able to identify what that looks like and to make that happen. I'm excited about the possibilities.

Spencer. Never really thought about adding members. We've always been kind of this small group and you're right as we expand it only makes sense to have to expand our leadership as a result of, you know, expanding numbers.

Don. Yeah, and the important thing to understand is it's not to lighten anybody's workload and it won't lighten my workload. That's not the point, the point is we need to have a bigger set of arms to put around the people that come to us, and we need to expand our capacity to interact, to provide shepherding, to provide counseling for people that want that. We need to expand our ability to do that and that, to me, seems to be the next

logical step to take place in the life of, you know, the long-term life of Truth Community Church. We'll see what the Lord has for us in that.

Spencer. So you don't know where we're going after Ephesians?

Don. What I hope on Sunday's, I want to do a little bit of a survey of the book of Jeremiah, talk about God's word to a dying nation. It seems like an appropriate time for us to be talking about things at that kind of level, and what did God's man say to a nation that was going off the rails. You know, we're in a country that's going off the rails and so what can we draw from that. It'll be a four or five week series. After that, I want to get back into Philippians on Sunday morning. You know, we'll see where things go from there. I prepare a lot of things in advance and so I have a long-term approach to the pulpit but I need to retain some of the element of surprise so let's move on and talk about something else.

Spencer. Sure. I was gonna ask you in that long-term plan, are we ever returning to Psalms?

Don. Yeah, oh yeah, that'll be on Tuesdays, probably in late October, November we'll be back there and, you know, I'm committed over time to finishing the Psalms. We're about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through. I intend to finish it if the Lord gives me life enough to do it. Are you going to ask me the dog question?

Spencer. The dog question. So I kicked it around. I was trying to decide if I was going to ask the dog question or not, but my kids every time we talk about doing a Q & A, my kids are always like, "Dad, dad, dad, you have to ask what is Pastor Don's favorite dog." Well, you know, it's our dog, of course.

Don. What is my favorite dog?

Spencer. What is your favorite dog.

Don. My favorite dog is any dog that does not belong to me. Any dog that I'm not responsible for is fine by me.

Spencer. So our dog does fit into that, that definition.

Don. Yeah, I like all of your dogs. Every one of them I like, just keep them at your house.

Spencer. Just keep them there. So in fact, Cora had asked at one point the question, "Why does Pastor Don not like dogs?"

Don. Why do I not like dogs? Yeah, that's a tough one to answer in mixed company. You know, I didn't grow up with dogs and so I never developed a natural like. I've never quite understood the attraction of having something that you had to, you know, you had to kind of structure your life around. You've got to pick up after it in many different ways and

that's just never appealed to me. I've got other things that I want to do with my hands and time and so, you know, I realize for some people that probably make them question my salvation, that I'm not a big fan of dogs but I can live with that.

Spencer. The way you describe dogs, it sounds like you don't really like kids either.

Don. Touche. That's a good, that's good. Kids are much much different. Yeah.

Spencer. Scripture is very clear that children are a blessing. It never says that about dogs.

Don. It never says that about dogs. Yeah, you know, my favorite verse when it comes to the topic of these particular animals is Philippians, I think it's 3:2 that says, "Beware of the dogs."

Spencer. Well, there you go. That explains it.

Don. Yeah, that's badly out of context but it's a refuge that I can go to when you put me on the spot like this.

Spencer. So the one last question I want to try and cover is really around preaching to ourselves as we walk through some of the hardships that we see outside these walls, as we come day after day and, you know, how do we preach to ourselves in the sense that helps us continue to go out and be the light that we need to be as we go out into the world. We often are faced with things like the government regulations whether as far away as California or they're right here in our backyard, how do we continue to preach to ourselves, to tell us, you know, to strengthen ourselves to walk through and say, yes, day in and day out I'm going to remain faithful to the word but I still have to live here on this earth in this very fallen dark world, how do I walk through this?

Don. That's a great question. I mean, life is hard, isn't it? You go through marriage issues, you go through death, you go through illness, reversals and all of that, and life is hard. I think that the clearest most powerful thing for us to do is to always come back to the Gospel of Christ. We have to come back to the Gospel and to remember that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Christ loved us, Christ loved me and gave himself up for me and that my sins are forgiven, that I have a Lord who loved me, who sacrificed for me, who took all of my sins in his body on the cross, that he has gladly shared his righteousness with me and covered me with his righteousness, and that I am his and he is mine in the language of that hymn. I am his and he is mine, and that is enough for us to be joyful as we cultivate a daily remembrance of who Christ is, what he has done for me, what he has planned for me, that he is with me always even to the end of the age, that though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for you are with me. You know, all of our comfort, all of our encouragement is bound up in Christ and in the salvation that he has purchased for us with his own blood, and that we are loved with an everlasting love. We've been led by grace that love to know, gracious Spirit from above, you have taught me it is so. And that is the key to walking through the mountains and the valleys of life is that Christ is with us and reminding ourselves that his death on

the cross was real, it was a real payment for my real sins, that his resurrection was real, that resurrection power is in me as a Christian, and that resurrection power guarantees the outcome of my salvation so that no one can pluck me from his hand. We just have to go back and refresh our hearts on what our real priorities and what our real affections are and that's found in the Gospel, that's found in the Lord Jesus. When he's precious to us, you know, all other things fade in comparison to the exaltation of him.

Spencer. Thank you for that. I wanted to also thank you for this time. I always have fun putting them together, the questions and preparing for these and I always get excited when we plan them and then it was delayed gratification, if you will, as we pushed it out a couple of weeks.

Don. You're going on vacation like, you know, in like three hours or something, aren't you?

Spencer. We're leaving in the morning so we are driving to Florida. We'll spend some time down there just a kind of change of scenery to get away. We'll continue to join through the live stream so that'll be a blessing to be able to do that.

Don. Well, thank you. Thank you for doing this and we look forward to having you and your sweet family back. You and Becky are an important part of our church and, you know, it's never the same when you guys are gone.

Spencer. We are leaving our dog in good hands. You don't have to worry about Frankie, she'll be just fine.

Don. Yeah, that's such a relief to me. Alright, can I have a final word here?

Spencer. Absolutely.

Don. Or is that not permitted?

Spencer. No, that's okay. Is that our alarm?

Don. Yeah, that's our alarm so time is up. You know, I just want to reiterate what I've said again on Sunday because it's just so prevalent in my mind. I'm just very grateful for this church. I'm grateful for all of you. I'm grateful for the sweet, gentle, humble spirit that I believe marks the congregation of Truth Community Church. It's a very precious treasure that I'm committed to doing everything in my power to guard and to protect. Your elders pray for you. Your elders love you and we're just very privileged, we're very privileged to serve the Lord by serving you. I can't imagine having a congregation that over the, you know, over these past couple of years that has been more supportive, loving, encouraging than what you all have been. I have stacks of cards that have come to me as you were trying to express your sympathy and encouragement in the recent family loss. Some of the things that were said were just, "Wow, really? This was said to me?" My heart is just overflowing with gratitude to God for this church and as long as the Lord

gives me breath and opportunity, I intend to keep doing what I'm doing until the Lord calls me home.

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