

# Who to trust

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[ 0 : 00 ] Matthew 23, verse 1. Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so do and observe what they tell you, but not the works they do, for they preach but do not practice.

They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.

They do all their deeds to be seen by others, for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honour at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others.

But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one father who is in heaven.

Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. The greatest among you shall be your servant.

[ 1 : 26 ] Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Will you pray with me as we come to God's word?

We're always in need of your help, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to understand your word and believe and be changed. So I ask for that now in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, many years ago, Emma and I went to Sydney to buy a car. Fantastic price.

Low kilometres. It was kind of a European brand. I was a bit excited by that. Now, once we got there, the location was a little strange. It was like this industrial area, and then the guy I met was a different name to the advert, but I ignored all that.

That's okay. We took it to a local mechanic. At least I had that amount of wisdom. And he decided not to charge us anything for looking at the car to make sure it was okay, because when he lifted it up and had a look, it was two cars welded together.

[ 2 : 46 ] Two VIN numbers. Those sorts of things, it's like, oh, man, who can you trust in life? Now, there were signs.

There were signs that I ignored. I love what seemed impressive, the great price, the great brand. Internally, it was a counterfeit.

Now, that's just buying a car. Now, wouldn't it be a shame if we were more careful about how we buy a car than we are about which spiritual authorities we listen to?

How much more is at stake? Eternity is at stake in terms of who we listen to. Our passage today is a warning about who not to trust.

Now, I know the elephant in the room is I'm here speaking as an authority. But who can you trust? We're given guidance here by Christ himself.

[ 3 : 59 ] I want us to be thinking about who are you listening to online? This is a measure of our health as elders in this church and as a church as a whole.

One day, you may need to move and find another church. And this is great preparation for that too. Who we trust to guide us to be right with God is vital, isn't it?

So, the context of where we're up to, we're still in the temple courts. It's a matter of days before Jesus goes to the cross. He's ridden in on a donkey. He's declared himself king.

He's receiving praise from children as if he's Yahweh himself. He's told those parables that increasingly warning the Pharisees that they are not listening to God because they're rejecting his son.

They try those gotcha questions, but he shows greater wisdom than Solomon. If King David gladly worshipped me, then why don't you? And now Jesus, this is confrontation, he's publicly exposing and accusing the Pharisees.

[ 5 : 18 ] Now, for Matthew's readers, original readers, this section would have helped explain why the religious leaders of the day were scrapped.

Yes, Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament, but there needed to be a changing of the guard. That would have been the original purpose, but notice in verse 1 and 2 who Jesus is speaking to.

Before verse 13, he speaks to the Pharisees themselves, but look who he's speaking to. It's to the crowds and to his disciples. Now, often when you talk about someone else to someone, that's slander.

Why do the disciples and the crowds need to hear this? Why do we need to hear this? And I think this helps us in why it's so relevant for us today.

I think there's two effects of this passage. One is, do not look to the Pharisees as your authority. They are blind guides.

[ 6 : 24 ] They are whitewashed tombs. They are hypocrites. Don't trust them. The second is, he's calling his people to a different authority.

And he's calling his people to be trustworthy spiritual leaders. To be sitting in Moses' seat is to claim succession of Moses' spiritual authority.

The Pharisees did have huge influence in the day. They were the people you would naturally look to and trust. The ancient historian Josephus writes, these, the Pharisees, have so great a power over the multitude that when they say anything against the king or against the high priest, they are presently believed.

They had huge influence. Now, verses two and three can be taken one of two ways. The first way is the scribes and the Pharisees do teach true doctrine.

So, listen to what they say. Just don't follow their lives. It doesn't match their lives. Now, if you take that view, their authority here must be very, very limited.

[ 7 : 45 ] It's about to end because he's, next week we're going to see he calls down God's woes, God's judgments. Their authority is coming to an end. So, if you take that view, their authority is very limited.

The second way to take these verses is he's using very sharp irony. They claim to sit on Moses' seat. They want you to obey everything.

But let me show you just how unlike Moses they are. They claim Now, it may feel a bit beneath Jesus to talk like that. But there's so much at stake.

Verse 13, they shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. They are leading people away from salvation. Paul uses very strong language in Galatians 5, 12, when those teachers are saying you need to be circumcised and obey the law.

I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves. It seems ungracious but when eternity is on the line you need to call it out.

[ 8 : 59 ] Now, I favour the latter but honestly I don't mind which view you take. I think there's pros and cons to both. Either way, the point is very clear in this passage. Don't trust them.

You can't trust them. whoever claims to be a spiritual guide has enormous power over anyone who believes that they do.

It's not just human authority, they're claiming God's authority. So it's so vital we know who we can trust. Jesus said, by their fruits you will know them.

In these verses we get three, it's not all scripture has to say but we've got three characteristics here of why they're false teachers. The second half of verse three, they preach but do not practice.

Now you can pick any of my sermons. Go for your life online and pick one and you will be able to charge me with that.

[ 10 : 13 ] Now assuming that my life isn't living up to God's word, now assuming Jesus isn't requiring total sanctification yet, what is he exposing here?

Maybe you are going to write to the elders later. But what is he exposing here? I think he's striking at the heart of what the Pharisees prided themselves on.

They were the gold standard of being godly. If you want to know what godliness looks like, look at me, is basically how they live their lives.

And yet, so they've got a reputation of being godly and yet, what we're going to see next week in verse 23 and 24, they are tithing their garden herbs, their cumin and their mint.

They're being that careful that they're neglecting the weightier matters of justice, mercy, faithfulness.

[ 11 : 27 ] There's this outward appearance of godliness but inwardly they are so unlike God. External reputation a show but no internal change.

have you noticed the qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3 are incredibly ordinary?

You're faithful to one wife, self-controlled, not drunkard, not violent but gentle, not a lover of money. It's very ordinary things. Can I suggest one of the reasons for that is that is one of the fruits of God's word actually reaching inside someone's heart and changing?

Not the public things but the day-to-day ordinary obedience where God is changing the heart. When that man thinks no eyes are watching him, is God's word grabbing his heart then?

grabbing his heart then? I've been personally convicted that my sermons are not a good measure of my godliness.

[ 12 : 53 ] They're not. My private prayer, which you have no idea, that is a much better gauge of my godliness or how much I've still got to go.

I was speaking to a missionary friend and he was saying that he thought he was already obeying God, like leaving behind everything comfortable, taking great risks in obeying the Great Commission but on the mission field he felt convicted that what God really wanted him to learn is just that ordinary, daily, unseen obedience, considerate of his wife and patient with his children and honest with his words and when his day's plans are thrown, does he trust God?

that is the evidence of God's word changing, not the outward show but the inward change.

So that's one fruit of false teachers. It's just, there's no inward reality. The second fruit is they burden God's sheep with rules and regulations.

Now, Jesus calls for much more radical obedience than the Pharisees do. You think tithing your garden herbs is radical. Jesus says, deny yourself, take up your cross, pray for your enemies, forgive.

[ 14 : 26 ] That is much harder, much, much harder. So it's not the degree of difficulty of the rule, the expectations. So what makes the Pharisees' rules burdensome?

Well, one thing is, they turn the rules of man as if they're God's rules. They emphasise the traditions of the fathers.

They added regulations to how to live out God's law. So God said, keep the Sabbath. Sabbath, they added don't even pluck a head of grain if you're hungry on the Sabbath.

They added rules. God's word often tells us principles, the why, why we should do something. But often he leaves a lot of room for how we express that.

And I think we confuse those two all the time. I think we're still prone today to make the man-made rules of how we do something and we load it with divine authority that that is how we must obey.

[ 15 : 48 ] So there's man-made rules and we load them with divine authority. That's one thing they did. But I think there's a deeper problem even than that. Jesus charges them, they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.

Not even their finger to help them. Now they were willing to tithe the garden herbs. I think what's being said is they laid down the law.

You are here when God wants you here. And if you're failing, no help whatsoever, just you need to be here and you're crushed.

It was graceless. You should be here like us, like me. No grace. As if how you perform is how God accepts you or not.

It's this subtle shift away from what religion has always been about. The law of Moses was always a response to God's rescue from Egypt.

[ 17 : 03 ] It was always in the context of grace. What God had done. Remember what God has done. Remember he is present to help you.

it's the shift from what God has done to what you must do. In this respect, they are so unlike Moses. When Israel failed with the golden calf, he didn't go, well, you'll get what you deserve, because they did deserve judgment. No, he went up and he interceded.

Blot me out of your book. He served the people. They are so unlike Moses. This shift from the focus on what God has done to what you must do, it's so subtle, but we feel it, that it's still a danger today.

In sermons, I think it's in good churches, probably in some of my sermons, you'll feel the shift. In one sermon, you're going to walk out feeling burdened, I've got to do more, I'm failing, pressure.

[ 18 : 26 ] In another sermon, your soul is refreshed, God is with me, to go into another week.

Now, what's the difference? Because the words can still be Jesus, God is great, and the words can sound really religious. Here's the difference.

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke of discipleship upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Pharisees put the expectation on you, what you must do to be right with God. Christ says, come to me. The difference between a sermon that's burdening or uplifting is, it's pretty simple to spot, is Christ.

I will serve you. Is that the message you're hearing? God will serve you. In me, you will find full divine acceptance.

[ 19 : 44 ] In me, you'll find full divine help. There's a famous preacher, I'm not going to mention his name because that's not the point.

My job is to teach principles, I think. I've stopped listening to him. He's a gospel loving man, don't get me wrong, but I've just stopped listening to him because too often his sermons, they're from the text, they apply the text, but they don't get to Christ.

They don't get to his person and what he's done for us. And I just, my soul just felt hungry. Who are you listening to online?

Do you need to change it? I've got a friend with Christian music. He said that he was listening to Christian music all the time, but he started to feel burdened by it because the songs were all about my response to God, my commitment to him, my love for him, my obedience, my praise.

It shifted. It was the wrong, no, no, no, we need much more songs about God, what you have done for me. It's a subtle shift and yet it's the difference between heaven and earth.

[ 21 : 15 ] They lay down the law without grace. It's Christless. Can I speak a word quickly to parents? We need to show the goodness and the beauty of authority that a Christian home isn't just about laying down expectations of what God wants us.

A Christian home is one filled with his mercy and grace. We need authority, don't hear me wrong, but the only way you can fill a home with mercy and grace is if you know you need mercy and grace and you can't fake that, there's no rules for that.

We need to be filled with Christ and his mercy if we want. Our kids to see that in us. So the first fruit, there's an outward show, there's no inward change to be like God.

The second fruit is that they burden with the law and it's just missing grace. The third fruit, they love their own reputation as being closer to God.

Verses 5 to 7. They do all their deeds to be seen by others. They turn acts for God to then make it about people's love for them.

[ 22 : 47 ] I can't even say the word phylactery, I don't know if I got that right, but it was a small box containing verses from the law, which Deuteronomy commanded, whether it's metaphorical or not, they took it literally and they bound it on their forehead or on their hand and their tassels were on the outer garments.

They were meant to be personal reminders to obey God's word, but they make them broad and long. Look at how godly I am. It's so twisted what the human heart can do.

Prayer. Haven't you heard prayers sometimes at public events like weddings and things where it's meant to be pouring out our helplessness before God, but it's this show of jargon and look at me and my passion for God.

It's so twisted in on ourselves. A generation ago, the big names in the evangelical English-speaking world were like Martin Lloyd-Jones, John Stott, and Dick Lucas.

And Phil Jensen from Sydney, he was talking about Dick Lucas and he said, you've never met a man who was less egocentric. Everybody else wanted to go and talk to the great one.

[ 24 : 21 ] But as soon as he got the impression that you came because he was the great one, that was the end of the conversation. He was always serving the people. That's the fruit of someone you can trust.

It's not about their name. They're not the great one. Again, they're so unlike Moses.

He was the authority, but on this one occasion when the 70 elders were filled with the spirit to prophesy, his assistants were saying, quick, Moses, stop them because the authority was spreading away from Moses to these other elders.

Are you jealous? For my sake, would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his spirit on them? Moses wasn't even trying to keep all the authority to himself. The Pharisees were. They loved their own name. Now, there might be an order to these three characteristics.

[ 25 : 31 ] If the deepest love that you and I have is the praise of people, you can't rejoice in God's grace because you don't get the praise.

He does. He gets it all. And so your religion, if you're looking for praise for people, it's all going to be for show, external. You don't care about the internal reality, you care about the external.

But if you love his grace, you want him to get the praise and you want that internal reality. Now, I don't think my love for people's praise will be fully eradicated until Jesus returns.

My motives are always, always mixed. I've known people to step back from music for a time because they just knew in their own heart that even while they're meant to be leading the congregation in worship.

Really, what they're wanting is you to love them. Now, you may not need a step back, but where is the Holy Spirit convicting you that you're doing it for the love of the praise of people?

[ 26 : 50 ] Name it. It's dangerous not to name it. That's the pathway to be refreshed in his grace again. Now, they're the fruits.

false teachers and people we shouldn't trust if their whole life is characterized by those three things. You might expect at this point that we're given characteristics of people you can trust, but that's not where Jesus goes. We're given something so much better than that.

Look at verses 8 to 10. 10. You are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers.

And call no man your father on earth, for you have one father who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. God himself is your teacher, your father, your authority.

[ 28 : 06 ] There's possibly a trinitarian nature in these verses. Jesus is claiming a radical change in salvation history.

Old Testament, their spiritual relationship with God depended on the leaders. If they were faithful, God blessed. If they weren't faithful, they were cursed.

A change is happening here. Jeremiah said the new covenant, no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and his brother, saying, know the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord.

one authority in God himself. That's true religion. A few of the people who have been influential in my life are no longer claiming to be Christian.

Sadly, I'm guessing I'm not the only one who can say that. Some of those are relationships in my life. Some of them are just public figures. But here's the thing, my faith is not shaken.

[ 29 : 17 ] It's very disturbing when that happens, isn't it? It's very disturbing. But my faith is not shaken because they're not my authority. God alone is in his word and by his spirit in the gospel.

Which means our faith is solid when he is our one authority. his gospel never fails us. At small group this week, I love the fact that they ganged up on me and disagreed with me.

I think I was the only one who believed at one point from the passage. It was wonderful because the word of God was the authority in the room.

That's true religion. One authority. Now, the Pharisees looked to their earlier rabbis and called them fathers and what they meant by that is all their teaching became capital T truth.

You can't disagree with them. Now, we have a history of faithful teachers that we stand on the shoulders of giants. We've got the early church fathers.

[ 30 : 32 ] We've got the reformers, Calvin, Luther. We've got the Baptist Confession. But we have one, one final authority.

They deserve our respect, but we have one authority. Catholics use this seat of Moses as part of the evidence for the Pope, whereas the passage is saying God's not going to share that seat with anyone.

He sits on that seat. false religion always puts something in between you and God in his word as the ultimate authority.

Whether it's a human or a tradition, some institution, something is in between. may sound like I'm trying to get out of my job, but elders and pastors and other authorities in our lives, they're a good

gift, but what it means is we're first and foremost brothers.

We're learners. I don't think Jesus is being hyper-democratic here. Human teachers are a gift from Christ, but if you look at Paul's ministry, especially 1 Thessalonians 2, there's this lovely section where he says, I was like a nursing mother to you.

[ 32 : 10 ] When they started off as Christians, they were so dependent on him, like a nursing mother, but then I was like a father to you. God's urging you, come on, you can do it, pushing out of the nest, but then he says, he calls them brothers.

True authorities push you away from themselves to Christ. We're a brotherhood in there. Every earthly teacher has gaps.

has prejudice, has prejudice, has imbalances, has that remaining sin of the love of praise of man, but Christ's blood has brought for us a father in heaven, one divine master, one teacher, in his word, by his spirit, which means our faith can never be shaken if we look to that authority.

there's so many capabilities in human teachers that we often, it attracts us, it gives us confidence in them, like their knowledge, their Bible knowledge, their widely read, or maybe it's their rhetoric, their debating skills are impressive, maybe it's their training, they've got PhDs, maybe it's their titles, reverend, bishop, pastor, senior pastor, maybe it's their charisma, they're passionate, they're zealous, you can look for their empathy, their tears, maybe you can look for their visionaries, they've got these grand plans, they can move people to get them done, it could be their popularity, but all that could be two chassis of a car welded together.

Let's not look at those things, they can be used for good or ill. Verses 11 and 12 tell us the fruit we're to look for.

[ 34 : 25 ] And this fruit can only come if someone looks to Jesus as the one authority and loves the grace of God. The greatest among you shall be your servant.

Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Humility. Do we look for humility? I'm going to say it again. Who you're listening to online, are they humble? Are they pushing away from self?

Are they so full of God and full of others? Are they aware of their propensity for loving people's praise?

Now one public teacher I followed is John Piper. Now I don't really care if you like his style or not. The point of this message is not to say hey listen only to John Piper.

[ 35 : 39 ] That would totally misunderstand the point of this sermon. Now whatever you think of him, there's something that's made me respect him even more because in 2011 he took eight months off every public speaking from the pulpit, from all conferences, there's one or two we couldn't get out of for some reason, but he was a great one.

He was selling books, there was huge following, he could have said look how God is blessing my ministry, there's no problem, but he took eight months off because of his marriage.

He could have just kept hidden. Now in terms of his marriage he writes, I would label my decades long besetting and hopefully weakening sins in this relationship with Noel as selfishness, self-pity, anger, blaming and sullenness, all of them species of pride.

God is as sovereign and gracious as ever and I find myself chastened, humbled and perhaps more usable now. Anyways, that humility made me respect him all the more.

Look for that kind of humility. Look for the fruit of serving the sheep.

[ 37 : 15 ] There can be so much talk of ministry and serving. We can use that. Don't we use those words so often? But self-love can use the flock for ministry goals whereas shepherding love for the sheep and for the flock will well ministry structures, they can change.

Does that spot need to be filled? it's always looking to the sheep and the church's best interests.

Now I'm guessing us as elders are going to offend you at some point by the way. I don't think servanthood means leaders will never offend.

If we've all got idols, I've still got idols in my heart, things people say to me still deeply offend me.

We should expect that. But can I suggest, look at a leader's track record.

Can you look back from that one issue and go, there is a trail of care. Can you say that? So who do we trust?

[ 38 : 29 ] Who can we trust? There's only one. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. in his word. We have one authority.

Jesus is just as displeased today with those who require loyalty to themselves rather than exalting Christ. They will be humbled by God in the end.

Don't follow them into God's displeasure. Listen to those who are most like Moses and the Lord, who are gentle and lowly in heart, who came not to be served but to serve, who love grace, and they point to God and his authority and they want him to get the praise.

God's I think this passage exposes how much of the Pharisee way of thinking still lurks in us. Thanks be to God that we have one authority, who's totally faithful, he's personally, presently our teacher and father and master.

[ 39 : 53 ] Your faith, my faith, depends on him. There's so much comfort in that, there's so much assurance in that, holding fast to the gospel of Christ in his word alone.

no power of hell, no scheme of man can ever pluck me from his hand. When you look to one authority, that's who you can trust.

Let's pray. Father, forgive us for the degree to which we still love the praise of people.

When we rob you of your praise, in your grace, and we rob ourselves of the peace that comes in resting in Christ, and the joy and courage to live for you that comes from that.

So please help us, Lord, to in this community, help one another to point each other to you again and again. We thank you that you are faithful.

[ 41 : 17 ] In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Thank you, Dave.

Some very sobering signals, I think, there out of scripture, isn't there? And thanks be to God for the message that he's brought us through Dave.

And Dave, thank you for the humility you demonstrated while you were expounding humility to us. Muses, if you'd like to come out, it's time for our next song.

And for those of you who dropped your children out to creche, now would be a good time to collect them. And Anne, I think we'll be taking years three to six out to the hall for their time together.

And straight after the song, Andrew, Wilco, if you'd like to come up and I'd like to lead us in prayer, that would be great. Thank you. What gift of grace is Jesus my Redeemer?

[ 42 : 38 ] There is no more for heaven now to give. He is my joy, my righteousness and freedom, my steadfast love, my deep and boundless peace.

To this I hold my hope is only Jesus, for my life is holy bound to His.

Oh, how strange and divine I can sing, all is mine, yet not I, but through Christ in me.

the night is dark, but I am not forsaken, for by my side the Savior He will stay.

I labor on in weakness and rejoicing, for in my need His power is displayed.

[ 44 : 08 ] to this I hold my shepherd will defend me, through the deepest valley He will lead.

O the night has been won and I shall overcome yet not I, but through Christ in me.

No fate I dread, I know I am forgiven, the future's sure, the price it has been paid, for Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon and He was raised to overthrow the grave.

To this I hold my sin has been defeated, Jesus now and ever is my plea.

All the chains are released, I can sing, I am free, yet not I, but through Christ in me.

[ 45 : 56 ] With every breath I long to follow Jesus, for He has said that He will bring me home, and day by day I know He will renew me until I stand with joy before the throne.

to this I hold my hope is only Jesus, all the glory evermore to Him.

When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat, yet not I, but through Christ in me.

through Christ When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat, yet not I, but through Christ in me.

Yet not I, but through Christ Christ in me. Good morning, everyone.

[ 47 : 43 ] Good morning, everyone.

God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. We hold confidence and hope because of knowing who you are and what Jesus has done. No plan of man or the evil one or even our own sin can change the glorious moment when we will be changed and spend eternity with you.

Father, we confess, though, just like the Pharisees and religious leaders, we can too easily keep up appearances, looking at things other than you to give us the joy that can only be found in you.

We can care more about titles, success in the world and being praised by others more than pleasing you. Father, help us not to be blind fools like the scribes and Pharisees.

Give us a love and genuine concern for others, just like you have for us. May our lives be known for serving others, to see others build up and grow and ultimately know you and help us to encourage

each other in church with the same attitude and the same mind.

[ 49 : 17 ] Lord, we thank you for many in our own church who model this care and self-sacrifice. And we pray as you change us each day, help us to live this way, even when our own flesh pulls us away to live selfish and self-exalting lives.

May there be a deep humility in us that reflects your glory. Lord, sometimes it is easy to despair at leaders in our country who don't reflect your model for leadership.

At times we have leaders who are interested in advancing their own agenda for their own glory rather than honouring the calling of serving the people. Father God, we pray you would continue to rise a generation of leaders in our churches and our community with a love for you and a servant heart for others.

We pray you might embolden these leaders to speak the truth in wisdom and love. Specifically, ask we would have leaders that honour your godly design for marriage and families.

Leaders that value the life of unborn children and uniqueness in the way that we are created. As male and female. And we pray for leaders that care for the poor, the widow and the orphan.

[ 50 : 29 ] We ask for leaders that do not care for the praise of men, but care only to advance what you say is good and true. Lord, we have many needs in our own church we want to bring before you.

We pray for the Pilliga trip and the Kids Club coming up in a couple of weeks. We thank you that we have seen the fruit and the willingness of kids and parents in previous years to hear the gospel. We pray this work might bring a harvest for your kingdom.

May you change the lives of many in this community as they see the love and service of the team to bring the message of good news of Jesus to them. Alongside Henry and Maria.

We also thank you for the opportunity for the church to outreach through Taste and See coming up in the next few weeks. Father, prepare the men who come along and don't know you to have soft hearts ready to listen.

And may you give Dave and the other men involved wisdom and words to speak in moments when they need them. Lord, for those who can't be with us today, our brothers and sisters in nursing homes or those unwell, give them a real peace in your presence, we ask.

[ 51 : 35 ] May they feel the special bond of being together, even though they can't be physically with us today. Lord, we also want to think of those grieving at the moment or mourning the loss of loved ones in the week past or the week ahead.

May you give them comfort. But some of us at church have anniversaries of loved ones we've lost. Others are living with the uncertain reality of others who are sick around them and don't have much time left.

Lord, how comforting it is to know that we can never be closer to knowing your peace and comfort when we are at our weakest moments. We also thank you too, Lord, for the women's conference that's happened over the weekend.

Thank you for the great blessing that's been for the women in our church. And may they go away from that feeling encouraged and more confident in learning more about you. For the week ahead, we know there will be joys and trials.

Give us eternal perspective in all we do and hearts and minds willing to do everything for your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen. Good morning.

[ 52 : 50 ] Church camp is 23 weeks away. Start getting excited now. So, it's always great, isn't it?

After church, we have coffee, we have tea, and it's really good to chat and get to know each other more. So, church camp is that on steroids.

It really is. It's really good, you know, a good time. I love church camp. I love the opportunity to be able to get to know people at, you know, a deeper level and to do it in a relaxed atmosphere as well.

So, this year we're going, not this year, next year, 23 weeks. Next year, 26, we're going to a crew camp. Now, it will not have escaped your notice that it costs a lot more than it has done, you know, like the last time.

But what we were aiming to get was to, that involved, last time it involved some people not even taking part at all or being present.

[ 54 : 04 ] They were there working, but not actually present. And so, we really want everyone to, you know, to be there, to be able to enjoy and to be able to, you know, mix with everyone and enjoy

one another's company.

And, of course, to sit under good Bible teaching in a relaxed way. So, yes, so consider it an investment in each other.

And 23 weeks, you know, put money aside each week for this. Don't, as it says in the bulletin, don't let it be a barrier.

Don't let the money be a barrier, okay? If you have an issue, if you think, well, even 23 weeks, this is going to be difficult to, you know, to get this money together, then please come and see either myself or one of the other elders or chairs, okay?

So, yes. Thanks. Thank you, Gareth.

[ 55 : 28 ] I know each of the church camps I've been to has been a great time in fellowship. So, I would commend that to everyone to make the effort to be there. Certainly well worth the time to spend in fellowship together.

All right. Just a few announcements. Firstly, birthdays. We've got three this week. Yin Min, Damien and Kaya.

Happy birthday to your birthdays this week. Grace Kids. I have a message for you from Grace Kids. They need teachers and helpers for term four.

Please see Catherine Gibbons if you feel that there's something that you can do there in that respect. The blokes taste and see. Thank you, Andrew, for praying for that.

It's part of the men's initiative over the next couple of months. There is a flyer out the front on the exit door. It flies on the table there.

[ 56 : 28 ] But Dave has requested that someone, we need a few hands to help prepare desserts for each of those four evenings. So, if anyone feels they'd be able to support the men and that fellowship together in that way, please talk to Dave.

And Grace Community Carols. It seems odd, doesn't it, to be talking in September about carols in December. And yet it is only weeks away. I just can't believe how fast this year has gone.

And so Grace Community Carols is set down for December 20th. Make sure you save the date.

And for those of you that are accustomed to using the FSM, please make sure you get into that FSM this week, if at all possible.

So that we can get a bit of an idea of who is going to be available and when. And provide them the opportunity to start to plan those carols.

And thank you for those of you that you are happy with us. And thank you for those of you that you are happy with us. And thank you for those of you that you are happy with us. And thank you for those of you that you are happy with us. And thank you for those of you that you are happy with us. And thank you for those of you that you are happy with us.

[ 57 : 39 ] !!! Andrew mentioned that we will be having morning tea and coffee, so please hang around after the service as we join a little bit of fellowship together.

And our guests, please do that. We would most welcome you to join us and have a bit of a chat. I'll call the musos up for the last song, please. And just before we have the last song, I might just close the service in prayer as well.

So if you could just join me in prayer for a moment before the musos bring us our last song. Our loving Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word today.

We've been reminded that true greatness in our earthly walk is not found in pride or position, but in humility and serving others.

Lord, help us to walk away from here today, not only as hearers of your word, but as doers. And Father, help us to seek to live as a servant-hearted followers of Christ.

[ 58 : 51 ] And Father, as we remember the depth of your love, we remember also that the greatest act of servant leadership was seen in your Son, who humbled himself to the point of death on a cross for us.

May that love break our pride, stir our hearts, and send us out to serve others in the same spirit of humility and grace. We ask this in the name of Christ Jesus, our Saviour and the Servant King.

Amen. Amen. I'll keep the Father's love for us.

How vast beyond the measure that he should give his only Son to make a rich his treasure.

How great the pain of searing loss, the Father turns his face away.

[ 60 : 27 ] As wounds which Mother's chosen one bring many sons to glory.

Behold the man upon a cross, my sin upon his shoulder.  
Ashamed I hear my mocking voice. Call out among the scoffers.  
It was my sin that held him there. Until it was accomplished.  
His dying breath has brought me life. I know that it is finished.  
[ 62 : 00 ] I will not boast in anything.

No gifts, no power, no wisdom. But I will boast in Jesus Christ.  
His death and resurrection. What should I gain from his reward?  
I cannot give an answer. But this I know with all my heart.  
His wounds have paid my answer. Why should I gain from his reward?  
[ 63 : 24 ] I cannot give an answer. But this I know with all my heart.  
His wounds have paid my ransom. Stop.  
Thank you.