

# "How Should Christians Disagree?" (Romans 14-15 + Q&A;)

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 21 November 2021

Preacher: William HC

[0:00] This is reading from Romans chapter 14 verse 1. As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions.

One person believes he may eat anything while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains. Let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.

Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own masters that he stands for all fails, and he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observe it in the honor of the Lord.

The one who eats, eats in the honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God. While the one who abstains, abstains in the honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

[1:09] For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to him.

I've always wondered, who allowed doggos to be this cute? Just look at these fluffy paws, perfect side profile, effortless winning smile. If all kinds of doggos could live in harmony with humans, then why can't we live in harmony with one another?

So many life questions. Where do we find all the answers? Mate, you just added one more to the list. Good afternoon, PCBC English.

So good to join you, even though it's on Zoom. And yeah, wouldn't we all love to be that doggy in the video, right? No need to worry about vaccination for COVID. Get free walks every day.

And everyone wants to be your friend. So yeah, it's hard, isn't it? We live in a time when I think our society, unlike what dogs experience, humans, we experience a very divided society, especially right in this moment.

[2:37] I mean, for example, even if you just have been alive this week, all around us, we've been hearing strong opinions, protests even about what the country should do.

And not just around COVID, but around opening borders, around the right government responses, what schools and businesses should be doing, and this upcoming traffic light system.

So it's hard. We live in a very divided time, even here in New Zealand. And yet we also disagree, right, within the body of Christ. Do we not?

I wonder if you've had some of these discussions already with brothers and sisters, even in this church, or maybe friends from who go to different churches.

For example, A thinks we should not allow unvaccinated people to worship in the same space for the vaccinated in the church. Or on the flip side, B thinks, hey, we should welcome everyone to church, regardless of their VAX status.

[3:37] Or maybe it's another issue. C would say, hey, let's sing traditional hymns, like holy, holy, holy, right? Some of you, I'm sure, grew up with sing-zoi, sing-zoi.

Let's sing that more to be familiar. But then D says we should sing contemporary songs to be accessible to everyone. Well, how do you feel about what we are as a Chinese heritage church, right?

Maybe E feels that we should do more in Chinese because, after all, we're a Chinese background church. But then F feels like we should do more in English because we're a church in New Zealand. None of these views, of course, none of them actually affect our salvation in Christ Jesus.

I loved what Nezi and Simi both reiterated and emphasized, right? We belong to the Lord, first and foremost. These issues that we might quarrel about, they're secondary, even tertiary issues. And yet we feel strongly about them, don't we? In the book of Ephesians, which we looked at earlier this year, chapter 4, verse 3 instructs Christians to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

[ 4 : 46 ] And so how should we deal with our differences as brothers and sisters? How should Christians disagree with one another? That's the topic we're looking at today as part of our series, going deep into life's questions.

And I think to help us with this, it'd be great if we take a closer look at the passage and the section of scripture that Nezi has referred us to in Romans, chapter 14. So take your Bibles if you don't have them already.

Let's turn to Romans, chapter 14, here in the Bible. And for a bit of context, the section Nezi just read comes from the Apostle Paul.

And this is actually his longest letter to a single church. And in chapter 14, he's actually in the middle of giving kind of practical instructions. And he's actually writing to a divided church.

There's at least two groups. We know that they exist because actually he addresses them both in the very start of the letter. Early in chapter 1, he talks about how all people have no excuse before a holy God.

[ 5 : 49 ] And in the very next chapter, he then addresses Jews. He says, you Jews have no excuse either because you don't obey God's law either. So whether or not you had grown up kind of in the religious traditions passed out from Moses and the prophets or whether you knew absolutely nothing about them, everyone in that church was in the same position.

Right. Romans, chapter 3, 23 to 24 says this. That's kind of the main message of the first half of the book of Romans.

And then when we get to chapter 12 onwards, here, Paul changes tack. He now starts talking about how should we live now that we know God's mercy?

What does it look like to be a living sacrifice in light of God's mercy? And so he talks about various things, right? And including loving one another, including submitting to the government in chapter 13.

And then when we get to Romans 14, Paul specifically addresses the issue of what do we do when we disagree about disputable matters?

[ 7 : 05 ] Or in other words, we might call them the gray areas of the Christian life. So PCBC English, what can we learn from a church where brothers and sisters held different views?

I want to suggest Paul gives us the one, two, three of mutual acceptance in Christ Jesus. So at the start of the chapter, he gives us one goal when it comes to disputable matters.

Then he gives two examples of disputable matters. And then he finally leaves us in the rest of the chapter, three practical changes we can make to our attitudes and actions, right?

So there's one goal, two examples, three practical changes. That's where we're going today in the next few minutes. So friends, how should Christians disagree with each other?

Firstly, Paul reminds us there is one goal, okay? When it comes to gray areas, disputable matters, there's one goal, mutual acceptance in Christ.

[ 8 : 07 ] Have a look at verse one, right? Verse one, it actually says, Accept him whose faith is weak without passing judgment on disputable matters. And now the word accept here in the NIV or whatever it says in your translation, it originally meant in the Greek, something like to receive someone into your circle of friends.

To accept someone, it would be kind of like inviting someone to join your Zoom exercise class. To accept someone would be to invite them to your next outdoor picnic.

And the same word accept or welcome actually appears again at the end of Paul's discussion. So actually, if you have your Bibles, you can turn down to Romans 15 and then verse 7.

And what you'll see there is that it says in closing, Accept one another then, just as Christ accepted you in order to bring praise to God. So the same Greek word is used there.

So you see on gray areas or disputable matters, our attitude should be in Christ, mutual acceptance. Why?

[ 9 : 19 ] Verse 7 of chapter 15 says, Because of the gospel, the good news of Christ. Because on the cross, Christ accepted you, welcomed you, invited you close.

Even though you and I, we were sinners separated from him, from a holy God. And this acceptance is what allows us to then actually magnify Jesus together with what verse 6 says, One heart, one mouth to glorify God the Father.

And so actually, if you're part of God's family, God's real family, then we should likewise welcome those of us who are weak in faith.

Let's turn back to chapter 14, verse 1 again. And now let me clarify. In the context, to be weak in faith does not actually refer to a weak faith in Christ.

You see, actually, Paul has spent 12 chapters assuring the Roman church of their faith in Christ through the gospel. It's on the basis of what Christ has done, not what they do.

[10:27] Rather, a weak faith here is referring to what the Christians believed about these gray areas. Later on in this chapter, in verse 22, further down, where it says, So whatever you believe about these things, keep between yourself and God.

The original text literally says the faith that you have about these things. And that word faith is exactly the same word up at the top of chapter 14. You see, the idea here is that this faith, weak in faith, is referring specifically to what you and I believe about secondary, tertiary issues, the gray areas.

And on these disputable matters, our one goal, says the Bible, should be mutual acceptance. Let's move on.

Next, I think, in this chapter, Paul highlights two examples of disputable matters. The first one, you can have a look in your Bibles in verse 2.

And it says this, one person's faith allows them to eat everything, but another person whose faith is weak eats only vegetables. So what seems to be happening here is that some of the Christians in Rome, they had no problem eating any kind of food, while others felt quite uncomfortable about eating meat in particular.

[11:50] And now it's not that they're trying to lose weight or they're on a special diet. It was actually because meat was often associated with the worship of other religions. I don't know how hungry you've been in lockdown.

Some of you in the chat obviously keep saying that you're hungry. When you go to Taiping to grab your favorite barbecue pork as a takeaway or some other Chinese supermarket, I wonder if you've noticed that sometimes there's an ancestor offering behind the front counter.

Or maybe there's a cat that sits there with the hand moving in, kind of drawing in some prosperity. How do you feel about that? Or maybe one day, next time your work colleagues get together and put on a shared lunch again, when we can do that again, how would you feel when hell's pizza gets served on the table?

Could you in good conscience eat a pizza from hell, as it were? This was the kind of problem that the Roman Christians were facing in their conscience. That's what was going on.

And so to this specific example, we see Paul, in the next few verses, do a couple of things. He gives a command, he reminds him of a promise, and then he asks a question.

[13:04] So let's have a look at verse 3, right? And it says, the man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, right? And vice versa.

And then afterwards, he says a promise, because God has accepted him or welcomed him. And then you see a question. Who are you who judges someone else's servant?

You see, there's a command, a promise, and a question. I've just highlighted it like a traffic light, so I thought it was quite timely. Paul moves on, and then he gives another example of a disputable matter at the start of verse 5.

And you can have a read, it says, verse 5, one person considers one day more sacred than another, while another person considers every day alike. What's going on here?

You see, those from Jewish backgrounds who were reading this letter, who were part of the church in Rome, they would have grown up year after year living out their Jewish heritage and their faith.

[14:08] And so actually, their whole lives would have been shaped around key festivals, festivals that they draw from the Bible, like the weekly Sabbath or different feasts like Passover or the Feast of the Unleavened Bread and whatever else that they found in Leviticus and have adapted.

You see, for the Jewish Christians, their whole lives were still shaped around these special events. But now what was going on is that new Christians were joining the church from non-Jewish backgrounds, and they had no idea about these days.

And some even brought their own festivals from their previous culture or their religion. I'm not sure who among you would consider Chinese New Year to be a special day in the life of the church or not.

Perhaps some of you might. Perhaps some of you would celebrate it. Maybe you'd put on a big party or a special service. I remember visiting a Chinese church once to preach, and they had big banners, right, in front of the church altar with kind of traditional Chinese script to talk about the blessing, right, that they have in Christ.

And so maybe if you really are keen on celebrating Chinese New Year as a church, you'd start a team, you'd organize an event, but then other people don't seem to be as interested.

[15:24] They might say, oh, yeah, I don't really celebrate Chinese New Year. Just another day for me. And then before long, you have people having different views, and then you start arguing and saying, we have to do this.

This is important to who we are. And before long, you're upset at people. You think, oh, those guys, they're so immature. They don't respect my culture. But before we pass judgment on each other, Paul suggests maybe we can take a step back.

And again, what do we see here in Romans chapter 14? We see him give a command, a promise, then a question, right? Have a read of the second half of verse 5. It says each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

That's the command, right? And his logic actually follows in verse 6. If you can do something with thankfulness to the Lord, you're free to decide. And then notice then what he does in verses 7 to 8. He actually reminds them of a promise, and it's back to the gospel again, okay? If we live, we live for the Lord. If we die, we die for the Lord. You see, because Jesus lived and died for us, whatever we do, whether we eat or drink, we need to do it, and we can do it to the glory of God.

[16:36] So whatever festivals that you celebrate or don't celebrate in your culture, if you can do it for the Lord in good conscience, then you can do it because of the gospel.

Wouldn't it be great if in church we thought this way? We looked at different people making different choices and thought they're trying to do it for the Lord instead of, oh, I think they better need to, they better stop that now.

And then again, right, we have the command, the promise, and then a question. Why then do you judge, verse 10? Well, why do you treat your brother or sister with contempt?

You see, in both examples that Paul gives, these issues, they don't concern a foundational truth about Christianity. They don't show up in the Lord's Prayer or the Apostles' Creed. They're not primary issues that determine whether we are in Christ.

And so in both cases, Paul gives an instruction, a command. He grounds it in the promise of the gospel, and then he asks a question. If I summarize it in the next slide, you can see that that's the same pattern that he does.

[17:42] And now let me qualify this, because as parents, right, we actually do need to train our children in discipline and instruction of the Lord. So sometimes we don't always say, be convinced in your own mind, right?

To our kids. And maybe your parents will do that to you too. Sometimes in love, we choose for them so that they can make better choices later. And of course, when we are in the position of leading or disciplining others, sometimes from time to time, we make decisions on behalf of the other person or of everyone.

And even as we heard from Simeon and Nasey, our MPs have to make some judgment calls sometimes with great difficulty. And we've just heard from our leaders about the traffic light system and our response to it.

But Paul knows, and we know that there are so many different situations where, if we're not careful, we can be in danger of dividing over disputable matters instead of united in the gospel.

So before things get out of control in your hearts and minds, remember, we can always pause, think of the command, remember the promise, and ask the question like Paul does.

[18:55] I wonder if you'd like to apply Paul's logic, all right, to the issue of vaccinations. You see, if you're fully vaccinated, and most of our churches, here's the command, don't look down on your brother or sister who's unvaccinated.

And here's the promise, God has welcomed him too in Jesus Christ. And a question, who are you to judge another person's servant?

Or maybe it comes to which political party to support, right? And here, I'm glad today I chose a color that was not red or blue to wear. Here's the command, though.

Be convinced in your own mind whether you can do this as someone who lives for the Lord. Your choice. But then remember also the promise. Christ lived and died for us.

So we belong to the Lord. That's our primary identity. And then the question, why do you judge your brother or sister? When we talk about people with different political beliefs or views, is that person an opponent, first and foremost?

[ 20 : 06 ] Or is that person someone who also belongs to the Lord? Should I treat him or her as an enemy to defeat? Or as someone who also stands before the Lord? Whatever it is, politics, vaccination, our view of government, worship styles, a choice of what to watch on Netflix.

We're going to have a range of views at a church our size. But perhaps we will need to be careful and gentle how we speak to each other about these views. Perhaps you may need to repent of a harsh comment or unkind thought about a brother or sister.

Maybe, as we heard earlier, we need to be slower to speak and quicker to listen. The Apostle Paul has urged us to strive for this one goal, right? Like mutual acceptance in Jesus Christ by giving two examples of gray area issues.

And so finally, briefly, in the rest of the chapter, I think that he suggests at least three practical changes to how we relate with each other. And so here, I'll just pick three from the rest of the chapter.

First practical change we can make, verse 13, right? We see it. Verse 13, it says, And here, actually, Paul was talking to the Christians with a strong conscience, i.e. those who feel like and are confident they're free to do anything.

[ 21 : 38 ] And the first change he suggests is, hey, don't you put a stumbling block in the way of your weaker brother or sister. In other words, don't insist that your view on a gray area is the only view that they must take to be faithful to Christ.

For example, are you ready to meet in person ASAP? That's fine. Don't push your view, though, on brothers and sisters who are not yet ready to meet in person for whatever reason.

After all, when it comes down to it, you actually have double the choices that they have, right? You can choose to meet or you can choose not to meet. And if they are hurt because of your actions or how you talk about your position, then actually, verse 15 says that you are no longer acting in love. Don't destroy your brother or sister for whom Christ died. That's one practical change we can make. Secondly, I think verse 19 teaches us that we need to pursue peace and mutually building each other up.

And this word pursue, or some translations, make every effort here in verse 19. It's actually a really strong word. In fact, in the Greek, it's the same word to describe when Paul persecutes the Christians.

[ 22 : 55 ] You know, whether, for example, in Philippians 3, chapter 3, verse 6, and other places. Persecute, to pursue, to chase after.

We're not just to kind of wishfully think that peace will come. We're called to chase after it. To hunt down every opportunity to be gracious and peaceful.

To build our brothers and sisters up. I wonder if that is what you are most passionate and zealous about. I mean, can I ask you? If someone scrolled through your stories on socials, what would they think you are most zealous about?

Or if they sat with you over dinner to have a chat, what would they discover from our conversations that you are most passionate about? How much effort do you and I spend in our groups talking and chasing peace and encouragement compared with talking about disputable matters?

I know I'm guilty of this at the dinner table in the past few months, especially with COVID being such a hot topic. And we need to be careful, right? As an English-speaking service.

[ 24 : 04 ] Because the less time we spend with our other brothers and sisters who speak a different language, the more we will start to feel differently on disputable matters. And the more, as we heard from Fran, pride can creep in, right?

We might start to feel judgmental about anything that's Chinese in our church that creeps in. That attitude that creeps in would be sin. And yet if PCBC, imagine if we could be a people who make every effort to care for people we disagree with.

Imagine if we as a church were less passionate about chasing left or right or canto first or English first or freedom first or safety first. Imagine if we were a church rather that chased down peace and understanding.

Would that not free us to focus on winning souls for Jesus, of making disciples as our goal? And would that not be something a watching and divided world would find amazing?

Would that not show the power of the gospel to save, transform, and to unite? And finally, briefly, Paul suggests, right, in chapter 15, verse 1, that we who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.

[ 25 : 25 ] And you know what? The best example of this attitude can only come from our Lord Jesus himself. He did not come to please himself or insist his way, but he humbled himself to the point of death on a cross.

And so the challenge for each one of us is this. On disputable matters, on gray area issues, can it be said that the cross of Christ shapes our speech and conduct?

Can it be said that Jesus is what is shaping how we serve the vaccinated and unvaccinated among us? Can it be said that the gospel is helping us to bear with those who are anxious about meeting in person again?

How can we bear with others, each other, instead of just pleasing ourselves? The next few weeks and months, PCBC, they're going to bring more challenges.

You can be sure of that. And yet, whatever disagreements arise, I hope that we can remember some of these points from Paul's wonderful letter. The one, two, threes of mutual acceptance in Christ.

[ 26 : 32 ] Let's learn and apply these examples when it comes to gray areas. Let's not cause brothers and sisters to stumble, but rather, can we be a church, a family that fight for peace and serve each other with the humility of Christ?

Let me pray, and then I'll worship in song. Father, many of us are weary in this lockdown, and yet you give us endurance.

Many of us are discouraged, and yet you encourage us, and you can give us a spirit of unity among ourselves as we follow Christ Jesus.

Would you work in our hearts with gospel hope so that with one heart and mouth, we would be a people, PCBC, that glorify you through our son, your son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We ask all these things in his precious name. Amen. So we are going to get into a time of Q&A.;

[ 27 : 37 ] So again, if you have any questions, please post it on Jamboard. Just a heads up, Pastor William is also on the panel. So if you guys have anything to ask him, any spicy questions to ask him about church and everything, sure thing, pop it on.

I can't do politics, so please pass the politics once to. But also, if you want to ask him, please post it on Jamboard. If you want to direct message me on chat, feel free to do that as well.

So I'll start off by asking Simeon, if you don't mind. But the question is, when conflict or disagreement arises in your workplace, what's the most important thing for you to do?

So for instance, what do you do or what do you think? Oh, that's a good question. I guess it depends on what the conflict is. If it's a disagreement with, if it's a disagreement, a political disagreement with somebody, particularly in Parliament, well, then I guess that's welcomed. Because as Nacey, I think, really well explained, you know, we go to Parliament, we kind of naturally will disagree with each other. So that's something which has to be done. I think respectfully, as much as can be.

[ 28 : 56 ] Obviously, you know, Parliament can be very robust, but it shouldn't be personal. And then I think that if it's more of a, if it's directly in a workplace, so for example, amongst staff or amongst your employer, I mean, we both employ people who work for us.

I think it's important to try and understand where the disagreement is coming from, what the issue is, take some time to look at the options and then work through a process to try and resolve it. And I think most of the time you can resolve disagreements, but not always. And sometimes you have to agree to disagree. And, you know, I think dealing with constituents or people in my electorate who often will disagree with me on a variety of things.

Sometimes it's just a matter of saying, look, actually, you know, you and I see that the world differently and we will agree to disagree on that issue. And I think that's fine as well, because I think if you can leave in a respectful way, it's always a good way to finish.

I think, if you guys don't mind, a personal question about that whole to agree to disagree. I think with that comes a lot of emotional baggage that you have to deal with yourself.

[ 30 : 10 ] Of course, no one wants to be disagreed with and no one wants to stay in disagreeing. So any tips on how to deal with those kind of emotional baggage that you can get? I think the hardest relationship that might be with a husband and a wife agreeing to disagree in that scenario.

So when I disagree with my wife and agreeing to disagree in that situation is probably the hardest one. I think the more you know somebody, the closer you are with them, the harder it is to agree to disagree.

And that's where I think, yeah, sometimes you have to, I think in some of those situations, often you have to potentially compromise your own views on a particular issue. Because actually it's important in those particular situations that actually there's a unity between, you know, that you're of the same mind as much as possible.

And I guess the same in the church. I mean, that's where you ultimately want to be as much of the same mind. And it's important to often compromise if you can't actually, in those situations where you can't agree to disagree, because a decision actually has to be made one way or the other.

And I think it's just like what you said, letting go of that thought that something has to be made, a decision has to be made. So, yeah, that's really, really good. Thank you, Simeon.

[ 31 : 35 ] I think I'll ask this next question, which is kind of related, but I'll ask this one to William. And don't worry, it's not a political one, William, but it's on, if you have any tips on how to disagree with other Christians that we, that have fundamentally belief issues.

So things like, you know, Destiny Church with the protest that's been happening. It's not political, William, but any tips on how to disagree?

I might have to give a politician's reply because, yeah, this is a hard one, because actually among those who are disagreeing, among those who have joined the protest, will actually be brothers and sisters in Christ.

But among them as well will be people who are, they're not even Christians at all, and they've probably jumped on the bandwagon. Some of them are bringing in their own ideologies and stuff. So it's actually, you need to be very careful.

Yeah, because, you know, I actually chatted with someone at church and said, you know, the wife didn't want the husband to go and protest, but the husband felt really strongly. And you have to treat some of these issues with care.

[ 32 : 52 ] It's not like, yeah, I think in those cases, it's not always as black and white as they have a fundamentally different belief system to me. Yeah, so I think we really need to take careful time, be very slow to judge and say, you're an active ex or you're an antifa or you're a neo-Nazi or whatever.

We need to hold those labels back and just ask, you know, why did you go? You know, what are your thoughts? Yeah. And better understand this situation. Yeah. So I don't know.

Yeah. I definitely, you know, I may still disagree with what they chose, but even in church, there are lots of times I counsel people when I say, well, let's say you shouldn't have sex with that person before you're married.

And then they might go do it anyways. And you still have to work through that disagreement, but talk to them gently. Yeah. So I don't know. Such a good reminder. Thank you, William, for, you know, reminding us not to label people with their actions, but actually go behind and actually really understand why they made that choice first.

I think that's really, really important. Nazi, since you said you're on Instagram, I think this would be a great question for you. So the question's asked, is there any tips on how you use social media well as Christians in the public sphere?

[ 34 : 11 ] So how do you unite and not divide? Okay. I think Pastor William gave us a good reminder today. If people followed you for a day, what would they see from your story? So I think that's a great question always to ask ourselves.

To use social media well. Look, I think that I'm of the mind that we live authentically as who we are as followers of Christ. And I actually, I would encourage a lot of us.

I think, I do think, though, okay, I'm a really technical person. So I think audiences are always in two camps, even in a kind of political way. So there's the ones who really like you and agree with you, right?

So that's why they follow you. And then there's the people, what I call, on the outside, right? So people who potentially think, oh, should I be voting for her? And similarly, as someone who isn't a Christian, right? So there will be people who are Christians, who are brothers and sisters in Christ. And there'll be people who aren't, that follow you on Instagram or other social media platforms. So I think constantly you have to be able to think that you're actually putting content out there for both of those groups.

[ 35 : 09 ] And so my suggestion, and this is how I think about it, it's just my way of thinking about it, is always to be able to be really raw and authentic. So the challenges that we face every day, you know, even with the policies that, you know, I think I need time to digest and I think I need time to work through, or the questions I have, you know, for my ministers that I would be able to put that through as well.

And to make a joke about it sometimes as well, if we don't think, if I don't think we've done very well on a particular policy. And sometimes the ministers would be the first to joke about it. So similarly in our path, I'm drawing parallels here.

So on our path in Jesus Christ, that if we failed, if we stumbled, if we haven't done something so well, that we think we failed God or failed other brothers and sisters, you know, make a joke about it and learn from the mistakes and then get on with it.

And I think that's on social media, we should be able to show that as well. And then for those who don't believe, I think it's about being able to show who you are really on the inside.

So, you know, I always think Thanksgiving is always a really kind of politically mutual slash religiously mutual thing to be able to do. But when people see that in tough times, we're able to give thanks for the most smallest things.

[ 36 : 18 ] And I saw a lot of you give thanks about food. These little things, right, that I think really shows the Christ that is within us. And when things get tough, I think to be able to struggle but have that strength within us to go to get through that shows Christ is living within us.

And can I just add a little bit more about the disagreeing part? I do think that if it's something that's not a fundamental issue. So in church, if it's not about Christ and his cross and salvation in heaven, then I think everything else we can, there's room to disagree on.

And similarly in the workplace, if you're disagreeing, it's something not about your human rights. It's not about your physical safety. If it's just something that is your opinion on something, then that's fine.

But if it touches to a point where it's actually offending you or it's actually limiting your freedom per se in terms of you being able to live out who you are, then I think that is the time that you really need to take strong action and you need to defend yourself, whether that's with law or about talking to your boss about it.

So good. And I think kind of linking to the next question that I do have here and I'll ask the me in this. So, you know, as you and Nacia are in an environment at work where you guys are constantly, like you said, in disagreement, a lot of times there will be, you know, like you said, policies that kind of go against what you fundamentally believe as a Christian.

[ 37 : 49 ] Is there any kind of structure in place where Christians can gather and edify one another, even though they're from like, for instance, you and Nacia are from different parties?

Like, is there anything in place, anything that you encourage other workplaces to set in place just to kind of promote that unity there? Yeah, that's a good question.

And so the answer is yes. And I think down in Parliament, what we do is there's a couple of, I think, semi-retired pastors who hold a, they're actually probably not retired at all, but they're very busy people.

But they host a parliamentary prayer breakfast every Wednesday morning down in Parliament. And so what happens when we go to Parliament is we go down on Tuesday morning or Monday night, fly down to Wellington.

And then we don't get home until Thursday night. So we stay down there for a few days while Parliament is happening. And during those weeks on Wednesday mornings, these people hold a parliamentary prayer breakfast where we get together and have breakfast and spend a bit of time reading the word and praying together.

[ 39 : 04 ] And, you know, it's a wonderful opportunity for us to come together in a non-political way, to talk about our families, talk about what's happening, and then spend some time around the word and actually have some fellowship.

And I think it's one of the most, for me, I find enjoyable times in the week, actually, just being able to have that opportunity. And I think, you know, it's a great thing if that is an opportunity for that to happen within your workplace or university or wherever it might be to, you know, it might be a coffee, it might be lunch, it might be something like that.

It doesn't have to be too formal. But just in a relaxed way, get together and have some fellowship during the week and things are really helpful way to encourage one another, even amongst people who might disagree with each other.

That's so good. And I think that's a great encouragement for even, you know, uni students, uni or high school students, or even any workplaces, that it's so important to have that fellowship with other Christians.

But yeah, I think with that, Nasee, I think I'll kind of add on a little question with that. And it's how, like, what kind of impact do you think such a fellowship has on you?

[ 40 : 15 ] Like, how important is it for you personally? Oh, like I said, that anchor analogy, I think that always, every time, especially in worship, because I used to lead worship as well back in my church, and I'm still someone, you know, who worships.

And so to be able to worship in parliament is something spectacular. Like, it's just absolutely amazing, bringing the presence of God and combining it with, I guess, what you call earthly powers, you know, obviously political powers.

And when those two things combine in the same physical location and a spiritual level, it's actually quite amazing. And so Simo talked about prayer breakfast. What we also have is something called prayer at parliament that happens, I think, once every term.

And so, you know, once every quarter, they would come into parliament and the worship band and everyone would get together and start praying. And I think that's really quite an amazing thing.

And just about the previous question, I would also encourage people is to actually step outside of the Christian circle as such. I don't know about you guys. So I'm a PK. I grew up being, you know, in church and amongst all believers.

[ 41 : 23 ] And so when I got into politics, something that I found really, I think, enlightening was to be able to talk to people on the other side. Other side. Not necessarily just to win them over, but just to understand where they've come from.

You know, I don't think I've had, and I'm just going to pick any issue, but I don't think I've had a trans friend ever growing up until I got into politics. And obviously, I still believe what I believe as a Christian, but then to be able to talk to them and to be able to actually understand where they're coming from and try to find that middle ground.

And ultimately is to try and find salvation for them, right? Is that I think that's somewhere that we can build those bridges and we can start building those environments where we can talk candidly about each other's, why we've believed in the things that we believe in or why we've become the person that we have.

And I think it's equally as important to be able to do that as well in politics. Yeah, that's a great reminder, actually. And one very last question.

And I'll pass it on to Simeon. It says, how do you deal with it when party positions are at odds with your faith or your values?

[ 42 : 40 ] So things like abortion, euthanasia, or the recent conversion therapy. Yeah, so those are all, that's a really good question.

I guess one of the things in Parliament, you get thrown issues all the time. And they can be, you know, really challenging. They could be ethical, moral, or they could be really boring.

Like, you know, I don't know, there's plenty of boring legislation which goes through Parliament, which you probably don't hear about because it maybe impacts like three people.

You know, there was a bill which went through earlier this year, which updated the Incorporated Society trust deed for the Girl Guides, I think it was. So that was fantastic.

But, you know, obviously I don't, you know. But what happens in Parliament is we meet as a caucus, as a National Party team, and we discuss issues, the bills going through Parliament. NACI will do the same in the Labour Party.

[ 43 : 41 ] And we debate them and we come to a position on them. And so, for example, with the Girl Guides one, I didn't really have an opinion on that. I'm not a girl, I'm not a guide. Never been in the Girl Guides, so I didn't really care.

And so that didn't, you know, there's nothing moral, ethical, anything like that. Abortion, euthanasia, those have been, those are issues of conscience. And so we get a conscience vote on them. And so we get to give our own particular position. And then on issues such as the conversion therapy one, that has been a party position.

And so we've taken a party position on that issue. And so we have a conversation within the caucus and come to a view. And I guess the reality is, you know, there is always an opportunity.

I guess this is what you have to, if something goes against your conscience and it goes against your most fundamental beliefs, you have to decide whether that's something you're prepared to, you know, prepared to cross the aisle or, as they say, you know, or leave the party over.

[ 44 : 52 ] And is that the hill that you're prepared to die on? So that's effectively the question you need to ask if it's something which is deeply, deeply. For me, if I had to vote in support of last, you know, the government's abortion legislation last term, if they hadn't given, if my party hadn't given me a conscience vote on that, that would have been something I couldn't have done.

So that's, you know, those are deeply held. That's why there's a conscience vote on those issues, because there's obviously deeply held views both ways. So it's always very complex. But then there's some issues which are more, there's some issues which are more in the middle.

And so you may have a very strong view on it, but your party takes a different view. And so in those issues, you ultimately, you're part of a team.

You have to go along with the team. And if it's not, for me, if it's not a matter of morality or conscience, then it's something which, you know, I have my say within that caucus room and then let it be.

And you have to go out there and argue positions that you don't agree with sometimes. And, you know, it can be difficult and challenging, but that's life. And if you go and work for, you know, a company, they're going to make you sell something you might not like.

[ 46 : 15 ] And you have to sell it and say it's the most amazing product in the world when you know it might not be. But that's life as well. So that's, but that ultimately, you know, that's part of politics.

You have to compromise from time to time. Wow. Now I kind of don't want to grow up anymore. But that's very, very true.

And thank you for explaining a little bit about how you guys do vote. Yeah. And with that, I think I'll ask you guys as finishing, how can we be praying for both of you?

And Nase, if you wanted to add anything on with that last question as well. But yeah, firstly, how can we be praying for you? Thank you, guys. I think definitely I would probably ask all of you to pray for us in terms of our faith, to stick to the Lord and to hold on to the Lord.

And also just when we're in our jobs is to show, is to live out Jesus Christ. I think that for me is more important than anything else is that, you know, when I deal with my constituents, when I, you know, when I speak on a stage or any stage, is to be able to show Christ through me.

[ 47 : 27 ] And I think that's the most important and that we don't lose sight of, I guess, heaven and the ultimate reward. And just, you know, on the last, on the previous question as well, I absolutely agree, Simo, in terms of being able to be in the caucus room and to have a good caucus that, good leaders who let you speak your mind and to work things through.

Often they say that politics is all about compromising. And I think it's actually pretty true from my experiences, is to be able to come in with your, I guess, your point of view and your standpoint and to be able to meet someone halfway.

And sometimes that happens in the caucus room. Sometimes that happens in the kind of the national forum on certain issues. But I would like to just also just to share a little bit about, you know, sometimes the policies and the ones that you've made, you've given examples are moral.

And Simo's talked about that. But there's also the other, I guess, underlying or what I call utilities-based bills that are actually just as important. So your economic ones, right?

And, you know, how do we achieve social justice for everyone? And the ones that, you know, protect our churches, for instance, you know, should churches still be free from paying rates, right?

[ 48 : 37 ] Like these little niggly things that I think, for me, as a politician at least, I see that as being able to open a conversation up about it. So when the conversion therapy, this is actually how I met Pastor Williams.

I don't know if he told you guys. But it was through when I did a forum with all the Chinese churches on the conversion therapy bill. So I think it starts with, especially for the Chinese community and us

migrants, is to start with the facts.

So sometimes there's lots and lots of things because of language barriers and because of, you know, a lack of knowledge on our political systems. Then we have to actually explain the whole entire bill to them first. And I think that's probably one of my main roles at the moment.

And then to facilitate a conversation about how effectively we can be campaigning for our views.

And let me, can I just remind all of us is that we as 120 MPs, New Zealanders, yes, while we might be able to make the decisions, but really at the end of the day, what all of you and your voices, you know, project in the public forum is just as important as ours.

And so it's not just only our jobs to make those bills, but it's also our jobs to listen to the voice of New Zealand as well. And so can I just say that it's everyone's responsibility to help shape New Zealand, especially in a democratic society that we are.

[ 49 : 50 ] And I, you know, since being in government, I fundamentally believe that New Zealand is a democratic society, but I do think people's voices get heard. And it's not just about money. It's not just about power and influence.

And so can I just encourage everyone that we all have a role to play in politics in New Zealand.

Thank you for that reminder. And Simeon, how can we be praying for you?

Yeah, I think Nacey said it really well there. You know, we face some really challenging times. I think particularly with COVID-19 as well, and the vaccine situation and the passports and the, you know, I just want to acknowledge it is difficult and challenging times, a lot of concern and division.

And, you know, I think ultimately I want to see New Zealand come through this and stay united.

And, you know, I'd like, I'm really worried about, you know, some of the outcomes of some of the things that are happening, but we just need to, I think, continue to pray for our government.

And, you know, Nacey's in the government and I pray for the government every day. And, you know, even though I'm in the opposition, it's important we pray for our government. We pray for our prime minister. We pray for those who make decisions.

[ 51 : 05 ] And I think that's really important. And then I think it's, you know, we, you know, I guess for me it's similar to Nacey in terms of how we deal with constituents and being able to be a voice on a lot.

Yeah, I think some of those issues, which they're still important, but, you know, our freedoms to worship, our freedoms to, you know, around churches and charitable status and, you know, all of those things which just value the role that Christianity and religion has in our society, which oftentimes goes under the radar.

But also, you know, there is an attack happening on a lot of that at the same time. There's a, you know, we look at those Brian Tamiki protests and we go, yep, he's a bit of an idiot.

And then the next thing is why churches, why do churches have exemption in the Charities Act from having, you know, from the donations? And most people would go, yeah, why should Brian Tamiki be able to claim charitable status?

That seems ridiculous. But you don't realise that he's the exception and 99% of churches are actually using that to be a blessing to their communities.

[ 52 : 21 ] And not just churches, but religion in general, other faiths as well. But, you know, so I think, but the narrative which gets pushed is, you know, well, because Brian Tamiki is doing something, therefore all churches are, you know, doing the same thing, which is completely false.

And so help, you know, pray for us to be able to speak into those debates which are happening and will continue to happen and that we can be an influence in parliament and in government.

Thank you. I think thank you both so much. Thank you. Thank you.