



Connecting People to **Jesus**

DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Monday, April 12, 2021

Pastor Eric Jay

Prayer: Jesus, we live in a world filled with sin and no one knows this better than You who took all of our sin upon Yourself on the cross, burying it, and rising again to give us the eternal life we did not deserve. Lord, as Your people of faith who have been redeemed, lead us and guide us our thoughts in Your Word that we may live lives that bring You glory in how we love one another. Amen.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 10:3-6

³ For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, ⁶ being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

Devotional – “Captivated by Christ”

“So, did you get the vaccine yet?” I would like to lovingly encourage you to stop asking that question of people. More than a few people I know (vaccinated and not) have expressed to me their dread of that question. To quote one of them, “It puts a pit in my stomach. You know it’s a question loaded with baggage, and I know the reason most people ask isn’t because they just really wanna make sure of my physical well-being.”

It is manifestly obvious that the whole topic of the pandemic has been charged with socio-political issues that have nothing to do with a person’s physical health and well-being. The evidence of this is how easy it is for us to make moral judgements on people regarding the decisions they make in regards to their personal health. Those moral judgements are not based in God’s Word, I assure you. As Christians, we judge according to God’s Word alone - not our own personal thoughts and opinions, or those of politicians, scientists, television personalities, pop stars, and doctors.

We need to remember that more people than you realize cannot, or are cautioned against getting the vaccine by their doctors. More people than you may realize will not receive the vaccine for other personal reasons. Those are decisions for people to make according to their own *private* health concerns and their conscience. Asking a person whether or not they “got the shot” disrespects what we all agreed was confidential and private health information prior to COVID. I find it to be highly doubtful that a simple “yes” or “no” answer would satisfy anyone asking whether or not someone else is vaccinated. Is that where the conversation has

ever ended when you have had it? That certainly isn't where it stops in our head even if the verbal exchange on the topic comes to an end after a "yes" or "no."

The culture and climate of shame and divisiveness that seems to only satisfy the world right now is too easily absorbed. We must consciously resist contributing towards it, and from what I have witnessed myself as a pastor, "did you get the vaccine?" is not a question that is contributing towards "building one another up" (1 Thess. 5:11). Certainly, and unfortunately, this pandemic has consumed too much of our thoughts, and what we think about controls what we talk about and what we act according to. This is why Scripture says, "Take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). Who or what consumes your thoughts? Politics, pandemics, other people's decisions, or God's Word in Christ? Romans 12:2 says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Not just in regards to our words concerning a pandemic and vaccines, but as regards all of life, we should do a lot more testing of what we think and say, giving every effort to discern what is good and acceptable according to God and His Word, and not the words of men.

Since the pandemic has consumed too much of us, asking someone whether or not they got vaccinated may be an unconscious conversation starter, but I would encourage you to consciously resist doing so. If you find yourself wondering "is pastor for or against vaccines?" you have missed my point. Here is my point: There is no answer to that question that will justify, as Christians, treating someone any differently than if they had cancer, HIV, physical deformities, a drug addiction, or a mental illness. Leprosy, which was extremely contagious, certainly didn't stop Jesus ministering to people, even when they came and knelt right at His feet (Matt. 8:2). Jesus then commanded His disciples to do the same. "And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. *You received without paying; give without pay.*" (Matthew 10:7-8). He didn't tell His disciples to wait until there was a manmade "cure" before they took the initiative and went to the lepers. And Jesus certainly never turned any of them away or distanced Himself from them when they came to Him repeatedly. If you have any knowledge of how the church has responded to plagues in the past (not just pandemics), and what the incredible positive results were for the church in the world, then you are probably as confounded as I am by how we, as Christians and the Church of Christ, have and are responding to much less severe circumstances in our time.

If you want to ask someone a question that is truly consequential (and controversial) and that truly deals with the well-being of all people, including your own, try asking, "Do you know that **Jesus Loves You?**"

Thanks for joining me for another time of devotion, and remember, that God has forgiven yesterday, is with you today, and has already taken care of tomorrow. Amen.