

As we consider the new COVID-19 mandates, protocols, and laws being implemented across our country and state, many of us find ourselves in difficult situations. Consider the following note from Pastor Dale as an “attitude protocol” for those of us who call claim the name of Christ and strive to look like him. . . at church, in the community, and even on social media.

Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Love one another with brotherly affection, and outdo one another in showing honor.

Encourage one another and build one another up, and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works!

[\(Philippians 2:1-4, Ephesians 4:2, Ephesians 5:1, I Thessalonians 5:11, Romans 12:10, Hebrews 10:24\)](#)

Let's be honest, this past year has been divisive to say the least –
politically,
racially,
socially,
spiritually.

As I write these words, I wonder how many of you are already frustrated because I put those four issues in an order different than you would have. I would tell you that I just wrote them as they came to mind. . . with no thought of the order, but that would probably point to an inherent bias that I had toward one or all of the issues.

Over the past year I have heard the following questions or statements, and nearly all of them have been restated this past week in light of the latest news.

Do I have to wear a mask?
What is the church saying about the vaccine?
It's all political until you lose a loved one.
No one is going to tell me what to do.
The (local/state/national) government is so inconsistent.
The CDC is so inconsistent.
The science is so inconsistent.
I trust science. I don't trust scientists.

We are headed into summer. Mandates are being lifted. New Guidelines are being added.
With caveats.
And exemptions.
And exceptions.
And parameters.

So. . . What are we doing at The Naz? Before we address specifics regarding masks, social distancing, vaccines, and the like, may I give some guidance on our attitudes? Along with the Scriptures that have been quoted (and misquoted) this past year, there are whole portions of God's Word we have failed to address. The Scriptures that have been woven together above speak to the heart of how believers are to live together. And while some of us will feel convicted by those Scriptures, others will share a sense of calm. Some may even feel a sense of relief that perhaps if we live by the principles found in these verses, we can return to a calm and peaceful world again. Nothing can be further from the truth. These verses will not solve all of our problems. The early church still had problems; the early church still faced persecution. But when they lived these verses out, the early church looked like Christ and people were drawn to them. As we move forward I would like us to redirect ourselves back to the Great Commandment. We are to "love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as our self." We see this most readily lived out in the example of our Lord as he became a servant among us. Christians pointed to his example frequently as noted by the various Scriptures above.

Those Scriptures, along with the Great Commandment, should guide our attitudes and lifestyles regardless of what rules are imposed on us by our governing authorities and what rules we implement as a church community that functions with a school and childcare, a playplace, bookstore, outside events, healthcare and taxes, café, athletic facility, and countless other things. Are the rules always going to apply to our facility uniformly? Quite simply, "No." Will that cause frustration when the ways in which the interpretations don't fall the way I want them? Quite simply, "Yes!"

But I can chose my attitude and my actions. And I am encouraging all of us, as a community, committed to reflecting Jesus Christ, to allow the following three things to guide our attitudes and actions:

- Protect Ourselves
- Love Our Neighbors
- Serve Our Community

Loving our neighbors will still be difficult. Sometimes that means deferring to others interests rather than my own. Sometimes it will get messy when I know that my actions might defer to one friend and anger another. There are no easy answers, but I do believe we can find helpful guidance from the words of faithful people who were living in a contentious society that sought their persecution and eradication. And the words always point and guide us not only to look at Jesus, but to love like he did and be willing to lay down our lives for others *like he did.*

-Pastor Dale