Q&A 2019-Part 3

Pastor Mike Fabarez

Pastor Mike Because today is a very special Sunday for us. It's the Sunday that we take the service time where we would normally be preaching and give you a chance to ask whatever questions you might have about the Christian life, about the Bible, Christian doctrine all of that is open. There are no plants, there are no pre-scripted questions out there. You don't text in your question, you don't write your question down. We're going to just have you grab a microphone and ask whatever question you have. It's going to be a fun morning. It always is. We like to know what's on your mind. Sometimes my sermons answer questions you're not asking. So we want to answer some questions that you are asking. I got two microphone brokers up here and they're going to find you when you wave them down and we'll get started, we'll dive right in and while one is being asked you can wave down the other one and we'll just go back and forth. So let's get started. Here we go. Wave these guys down, Start right here, second row.

Question My question is we can praise the Lord, we can love the Lord. Why do most of us have trouble 100% of the time trusting Lord?

Pastor Mike And the question is how do we do that more? Yeah. That's a great question. Well, we're not going to trust someone we don't know well. Right? I mean it's hard for us to trust strangers. So, I think the goal of learning to trust God is learning his track record and his character. So I would say more Bible study. That's a pretty simple answer from a pastor on a Sunday morning. But what we really need is to know the Lord better. We know the Lord by the self-disclosure that he gives us in his Word. Some of us think that we're biblically literate because we read the Bible. We need to go further than that. We need to study the Bible, which means we're taking time in a small section of Scripture, we're unpacking that in its original context, we're trying to principalize the text by drawing out eternal truths, and then we're seeking to apply it. So that's going from reading to study and then from study to memorizing the Scripture and meditating on the Scripture, which means that we're taking it in our mind and cogitating on it while the music's off, while the phone is not ringing. Those kinds of things, just getting that into our lives by having a reading, study, memorizing, and meditating practice of the Bible, we get to know the Bible better. So just because you read the Bible or you go through the Daily Bible Reading doesn't necessarily mean you're learning what it is to know the trustworthiness of God. We get to know him even experientially by knowing his Word. So more Bible study will teach you to trust the Lord better.

Question I got a question about my daughter's school. She attends a Christian school and they believe in teaching the kids Confirmation. I don't know much about that so I wanted to ask you is it OK for my daughter to go through the ritualistic ceremony of Confirmation even though she doesn't know what she's doing and it's just more like a ceremony to her.

Pastor Mike This is a Catholic school I assume.

Question No, it's Lutheran.

Pastor Mike A Lutheran School. Okay. One step removed but a good step in the right direction so that's good. And my answer would be, no, it's not okay. We never get my kid involved in something spiritually, that is, that is a ritual that they're not engaged in. Now, I'll get them what we call in line with the means of grace. In other words, I'm all about them sitting under preaching, I'm all into them bowing their heads and concentrating on my words when I'm praying. But if they are not connecting with the truths that are trying to be expressed in this Lutheran Confirmation then I would say, no, I don't want them to be involved in it. And then I would say, secondarily, how the Lutherans view Confirmation would not be how I would view conversion. Therefore, I would say I'm not even interested in the ritual. I mean, there are rituals, I understand, if you want to call them that. They're ordinances that you go through like baptism and the Lord's Supper that are biblically directed. I would say, yeah, I do want my kids involved in any of those without a full understanding of what they're doing, which would be at least commensurate with what you're asking. I would say, yeah, I would not have my kid participate, you're asking me, Mike Fabarez, would not have my kid participating in a confirmation of a Lutheran School. I just wouldn't do it. That's my answer. Lutherans are mad at me now but that's my answer.

Question This question is more about election versus free will. Like the Arminianism versus Calvinism. So from James we learn that faith without works is dead. In Ephesians we learn that we're saved by faith not by ourselves, it's a gift of God, so no one can boast. So is it possible, my question is: is it possible that my reverence, my appreciation of the gift of God's election through his grace and by the power of the Holy Spirit, is it sufficient to guide me, correct me, along the way and assure me of my salvation?

Pastor Mike I missed one word in that. Would you start at the beginning of that sentence again? Is my...

Question Is it possible that my reverence...

Pastor Mike My reverence, is that what you said?

Question Yeah. Reverence for God. His gift, his free gift that he has given me.

Pastor Mike Is it... Let's say it again. I'm sorry, I'm a little slow. So, is my reverence and...

Question Is it possible that my reverence and my appreciation of this gift... A lot of people I talk to, "Like, well you just raise that as an excuse. I don't. I revere this salvation. That I was elected as a child by Christ, to have that relationship with him.

Pastor Mike So finish that sentence though is it what...

Question So my question is, I guess, is basically is it sufficient to guide me, correct me, along the way and assure me of my salvation. You know, that James versus Ephesians and having clarity on that.

Pastor Mike Yeah. Well if you look at the difference between James 2 and Romans 4, which is what people have pitted against each other. We're saved not by works. Right? We're not justified by our works. That's the statement in Romans 4 and then in James 2 we are justified by our works. Clearly in the context these are not irreconcilable passages. It's that one the context clearly is talking about the faith without works is dead. In other words, we are justified in the fact that we have that assurance, which is your question, because of the outworking of my faith. But before God we're not justified by anything that we do. We're justified by his declaration, his forensic declaration that we are forgiven in Christ. That happens, at least in time, by the fact that I have expressed this faith in him, that I have a confidence in the finished work of Christ. So, I'm going to say your gratitude, your reverence, your valuing of the free grace of God is going to produce the things that will produce the assurance.

Pastor Mike In other words, the gratitude for the election, as you put it, of God's grace in your life will be the fuel for the works that you should be able to point at and say, "Here are the works that give me assurance." I say that because that's the way it's presented to us in Scripture. In First John Chapter 3, in particular the whole chapter, is going to tell me that the reality of my faith is proven by my changed life, the trajectory of my changed life. In Chapter 1 it says of First John 1, none of us are without sin. If you say without sin you're lying. But Chapter 3 it's saying you should see a consistent directional change in your life. And the question would be what fuels that? And what fuels that, is what motivates that is this grace that God has given me.

Pastor Mike So, it's not enough to say my reverence and my gratitude. It is the fuel. But what it does it produces the fruit and the fruit I look at and say, "Hey, good tree bears good fruit, bad tree bears bad fruit. I'm looking at the fruit and that's giving me assurance." Assurance is a tricky concept if you think about it. There subjectivity to saying I know that I know that I'm a child of God. Well how do I know that? Well because I'm bearing fruit. Jesus says you'll know them by their fruits. So, that needs to be present to give me assurance. But I know that the thing that's going to get me there is not doing good works to be accepted by God, but doing good works because I recognize the gratitude for his grace that produces something I can look at and say that wasn't there before.

Pastor Mike For us as a subjective witness to those things it's seeing them produced organically from the inside out. Anyone can conform to an external standard, but what we're looking for is the change within our hearts, being a new person in Christ, that changes who we are that then drives something from the outside. To speak of that passage, to talk about that purification process of my life, it's coming from something inside of me, this hope of the assurance of the fact that I am God's. So yes and no. It's the catalyst for the thing that I'm going to be able to look at. We should be able to say I know that I'm a Christian because I responded right with the gospel, I can see that in my history, but I know it because the gratitude from that has produced these fruits. Yeah, that's the short answer I guess.

Question I enjoy getting that book from Focal Point this month. And I wondered if you agree with Ron Rhodes about the pre-tribulation rapture.

Pastor Mike Yeah, I do. Now listen, the tribulational view is not the test of orthodoxy. Let me say that. But I do believe that the 70th week of Daniel, Chapter 9 of Daniel, the Time of Jacob's Trouble as it's called in the Old Testament, the time of great tribulation, tribulation Jesus said has never been on the face of the earth from the beginning of time and to the end of time, that period of time, I believe, as it says in First Thessalonians, is the expression of God's wrath. He's coming to the earth to express his wrath on his people. We're not destined for that. I think that he's moving in the Time of Jacob's Trouble, the 70th week, that is determined for Daniel's people in Daniel's holy city, which is Jerusalem and Israel, that God is now turning his attention back to that, as it says in Revelation, we got 144,000 Jewish missionaries from all the Twelve Tribes and I believe all of that is fulfilling the prophetic promise of the Old Testament to Israel. Therefore, I'm believing the Church is going to be taken out of the way before that 70th week of Daniel, that seven-year period, the Time of Jacob's Trouble, the Great Tribulation. And I believe that, yes.

Pastor Mike There's going to be a population of conversions. I mean, propagation of the gospel during the tribulational period and the saints, they're called that, the elect in that period, but these are people who are being saved within the tribulational period. But I believe that the Church is taken out of the way. You've got, I mean, the word Ekklesia, the word for church, shows up, I don't know, 15 times, 16 times, I think, in the first three chapters of Revelation. We don't have any mention of it from Chapter 4 to Chapter 19, and then you have it once at the end of the book. The Church is not the focus of the book of Revelation, the nation of Israel is and the world of course. So, yeah, I believe in the pre-trib rapture. There's a book by Mark Hitchcock and Ed Hindson called Can We Still Believe In the Rapture? It came out, I think Harvest House published it. But I might recommend that book to you. It should be in our bookstore. Can I Still Believe In the Rapture? I think is the name of that book by Hindson and Hitchcock. Might be a good read for you.

Question Question on First Samuel 19. It talks about when Saul tries to kill David and then in verses 9 and 10 particularly how the Lord sent a harmful spirit onto Saul, which ultimately led him to trying to kill David. It's having a difficulty understanding why a good God would send an evil or harmful spirit onto Saul, which ultimately is him trying to kill David. Why would God do that? And the theology behind that.

Pastor Mike The immediate cause versus the ultimate cause. We see this throughout the Bible. Right? In Job Chapter 1 and 2 you see Job being decimated in his life, his family, his kids, his income, his home, his health all of that being decimated by the enemy. But you look back and see how that all unfolds in the first two chapters, God is orchestrating all of this in that he is allowing this all to happen to prove a point. David, if you look at Chronicles and First Samuel, they're depicted in different ways when he numbers the troops. It speaks of David numbering the troops, which is completely antithetical to him trusting in the Lord like he did when he had a slingshot in his hand, and yet it says in the parallel passage that, you know, the Lord had incited him. Right? So Satan incited him, the Lord is inciting him, what's going on here?

Pastor Mike Well, God ultimately can be held responsible in the sense, not as the immediate cause, but as the God who is sovereign over all things, to allow these things to happen. Second Corinthians Chapter 12, Paul has a thorn in the flesh. He calls it a messenger of Satan. Well, who's

causing this? Well he's just told you, Satan's causing it. Well, he says that all of this was ultimately God's plan to keep him from exalting himself having all these revelations, so it was God ultimately. So who's to blame for that? Well, because it's a bad thing, the immediate cause of it, of course, is the enemy, Satan. But the ultimate cause you could say, well, this is part of God's plan. Why? Because here's what the Bible says, Romans Chapter 8. Right? "God works all things together for good to those that love God and are called according to his purpose." God works them all together? Is God doing all this?

Pastor Mike Well, God is the God who's architected the whole thing. But the immediate cause of the bad, clearly, are the agencies here. So you can stand back and say, what's going on here? Like when Jesus said when that tower of Siloam fell on those people. Right? "Do you think they were worst sinners than all the rest?" What was that all about? It was just a natural cause. Well, God ultimately in his sovereignty is behind that. "Does calamity come to a city," the Bible says, "without the Lord decreeing it?" No, no, it never does right. God is in charge of all that. Now we want to somehow protect God by saying, well, you know, he doesn't have anything to do with it. Well then you've just tied God's hands in the corner and he's wringing his hands and wondering what's going to happen in this chaotic world. "Well, he knows everything, Mike. He's not wringing his hands." Yeah, but he's not a God powerless. Right? He's a God who oversees all of this.

Pastor Mike And even in the architectural plans of human history there are a lot of bad things in there that, according to Romans 11, were all decreed ultimately for his glory. So, we recognize the immediate cause we can attribute to Satan, and the parallel passages help us sometimes because sometimes we can see the immediate cause is the enemy, but ultimately God is the cause. Even in the Babylonian captivity, Cyrus, interestingly, he's being called a messiah, an anointed one of God, though he is a pagan king, because God is using him like pawns. Habakkuk Chapter 1, the Babylonian leaders, Nebuchadnezzar himself, even used as a tool of God to do what he wanted done with Israel. Right? He's responsible for that? Well, Satan is certainly, according to Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, Satan is the ultimate worker behind all this evil. Well, he is, but he's not the ultimate worker behind them all. God is.

Pastor Mike So, that's not a satisfying answer, but you either have a sovereign God or you don't, and if you do then you have a God, who though he can't be credited with the actual immediate cause of evil, he certainly, in his plan, has architected this and allowed those things and therefore you could say, "God, can calamity come to a city if the Lord hadn't first decreed it?" He clearly has. That's a hard question. We're always going to have that on Q and A weekend. So, we've gotten it out of the way. So there we go.

Question I was reading that Jesus says that it's a sin if you even look at a woman with lust. I was just wondering is habitual pornography a reason for divorce biblically? And how should the church define an affair specifically?

Pastor Mike Well, let's say this. Divorce, is it biblical cause for divorce? It would be like me talking as a physician, when am I allowed to amputate my arm? Right? That would probably not how you'd want to pose the question. Right? It's like there is a time to amputate your arm, but it's got to be a really bad situation. Right? A really bad situation. Some people just they don't like

their marriage, they don't like their spouse, they're looking for a reason to amputate this marriage. And so I'm going to say this: God hates divorce, Malachi says, so I know that this is never a good thing. The doctor should always hate cutting off your arm. You should never like that. Right? And so it is that you should say this is a severe response to a severe problem.

Pastor Mike And you can look at Matthew 19 and say, well, it says right there, you know, if you divorce your wife and marry another person you're going to commit adultery, cause your ex-spouse to commit adultery, unless it's for the sake of adultery. Well great. Then as long as I can find adultery there and define it somehow, then I got my ticket and get to get out of this marriage. I'm just saying that's the approach we often get as pastors. "When can I divorce my spouse?" Right? And that's when we need to say, wait, wait. That's not the approach to this. The approach should be always to reconcile, to save marriages, to reunite, to forgive, to restore. That's our job. We are pro-marriage, we want to see these marriages saved.

Pastor Mike There are situations, though, obviously, and that's one of them, Matthew 19, First Corinthians 7. You've got passages that say here's the situation and it cannot be fixed. Right? And the two situations there, Matthew 19, are this habitual, what we would assume in the passage would be unrepentant adultery. And I say that because you go to Hosea and see adultery, even prostitution, and if there is forgiveness and contrition, well then there can be reconciliation and I will always be in favor of that. And in First Corinthians 7, the abandonment of a non-Christian leaving a Christian spouse, and there's another passage Paul says let them go. You should never seek the divorce, he says, because you might be the agency to see your spouse saved. But, if they leave, let them go, you're called to peace. And the end of the passage, if you're in peace, the point should be you can seek to marry another but only in the Lord. So solve the issue of spiritual foundation.

Pastor Mike So all I'm going to say is this: I just don't like the way so often we are approached as pastors to find out what it takes so I can get out of this marriage. But I am going to say it's going to be that in those terrible situations with unrepentant adultery, I don't think that catching your husband, you know, skimming an Internet site or even in multiple situations looking at Internet pornography, constitutes what Jesus had in mind in Matthew 19 for that kind of unrepentant adultery.

Pastor Mike So, I think you could define that kind of adultery in a variety of ways. Right? The Greek word, and people will point this out, is the Greek word "porneia." And porneia, they say, "Oh, the word porn is in that." No, it is. Right? Because porn is about illicit sexual behavior. That's where porn gets its name from the word porneia. But porneia has a definition and it has to do with the abandonment of someone's marital vow to pursue another person. So all I'm saying is this: it needs to be a serious matter, I would say an unrepentant, unresponsive spouse going after another person. Are there situations where there hasn't been technical, you know, there hasn't been a, I mean, I don't know, we got to be careful with my vocabulary here, but, yeah, had you consummated this adulterous relation?

Pastor Mike I think there's a range of situations that would still say a pastor and a biblical counselor could say this is a really, really bad case of what you see in Scripture of an unrepentant,

straying spouse. And then if a spouse came and said, "Could I biblically get a divorce and remarry?" The answer would then be yes. Because that's the whole point. Even First Corinthians 7 speaks of the person saying, "Hey, if you want to be done I guess you can be done but you can't be remarried." And no one wants to discuss that situation because everyone wants to be free to marry someone else. And that's the weird thing about pastoral ministry. People who are married want to be single, and single people want to be married. It's a struggle in our counseling all the time. It's like, I don't know. Can you make up your mind? But, the point is that I think you should definitely always seek pastoral counsel, you should always lay everything out on the table and you should always recognize God is pro-reconciliation, pro-repentance, pro-restoration. We should seek that really, really hard until we can all say, I hope with a coach or referee standing by, a pastoral biblical counselor could say, you know what, I agree with you, there's no reconciliation here possible. And, you know, you'd be free to divorce and then marry another without violating Scripture.

Question I recently had the ability to share the gospel with a co-worker. He thinks a little bit differently and he's struggling with the fact that accepting Christ is the way. He's determined that if you kind of go to a map you can select the regions where people will be saved based off of where they grow up, like heavily Muslim areas or even down to an island that people might not reach to share the gospel. I try to talk about taking God out of it, you know, kind of saying that he can't do anything is totally removing God from everything. I'm trying to figure out a way to express to him how these people can still experience Christ and accept him even though they may grow up in certain regions.

Pastor Mike Samuel Zwemer might be a name to look up, and I'll get back to that. Let me start with an illustration. When I share the gospel and someone starts to hit me with that, which is usually, you know, "Well, what about... what about them, what about them, what about the Aborigine, what about, you know, someone in the interior of wherever, Papua New Guinea? They don't have the Gospels, therefore I'm not going to respond to the gospel." Right. That's like the ship sinking, here's the lifeboat, I'm showing you the way to the lifeboat, and you're going to tell me, "Well, there's someone up there in the crow's nest I don't think can get here so I'm not getting in." That's stupid, right? I mean, it just is stupid if you think about it. We're talking about heaven and hell, we're talking about you being guilty of your sin and deserving punishment, I'm giving you right now the answer to that. There's no other name given among men by which you must be saved and here it is, here is the solution. Why don't you get saved with me and I can send you to those places on that little island so that you can get them saved? Right? That's what I'd want to say to you.

Pastor Mike But see, really I think so often it's a smokescreen and they're pushing me back because, here's the thing it says in Romans Chapter 1, they're "suppressing the truth by their own righteousness." They don't want to be saved. And I get that. Right? I get it. You don't want someone to be the God of your life other than you. Right? You might even let Jesus be your co-pilot but you don't want him being the pilot. And that's how people think and so often they're looking for any excuse they can get. And here's how I would start and I do start, usually, when I get someone saying things like that and certainly in that category, I'll say, "Hey, if I could solve this for you. What you're asking, that you're really concerned about this, you know, this person in

this place that doesn't have a church. If I could just completely solve that problem for you, would you become a Christian today? Would you become a Christian today? Would you commit your life to follow Jesus Christ if I could just deal with that?" No. "Let's see if I can in a minute but can you tell me you're ready, this is really your hang up." And nine times out of ten they say, "No, Mike." Well then what are we doing with this question? I'm ready to answer it.

Pastor Mike That's why I started with Samuel Zwemer and I'll talk about that in a minute, or even Don Richardson is another author you could look at. But I don't think that's often going to get you anywhere. So the question behind the question is, "I want to be let off the hook because I don't want to submit to God. And I'm hoping I can point to someone else that can't get to the lifeboat or I don't think they can." You might be surprised at the way God has reached people that you think are unreached. And Samuel Zwemer is one. And that's an old-school guy who's written on missiology and anthropologists, missiologists, who's talked about these groups of people in and out of the way places where the gospel has taken root and you'd never think there's any logical way the gospel could've got there.

Pastor Mike Don Richardson wrote a book called Peace Child, that's kind of dated now too, but I would look that up, talking about the same thing. In places where you find it's more modernized in his writing about how the gospel has penetrated places that anthropologists are shocked that the gospel would ever be. How did it get there? God has not, as the Bible says, left himself without testimony. As often we see in Scripture, if you live up to the light that you have, God is going to give you more light. You see a lot of folks responding rightly to the light they have.

Pastor Mike What light do they have? Everyone has the light of conscience unless they're not capable of reasoning in their minds, and they have the light of creation assuming they're intelligible and can take in the basics of God's divine attributes through nature. With conscience and creation, the Bible says, you've got enough to respond, at least to God's call of saying you're a sinner and you've got a problem and you need help, you need a solution. Then I think if you respond rightly to those things, speaking humanly now, God's going to give you the last thing, which in Chapter 2 of Romans, is the Scripture. You're going to get the truth of this Scripture, whether you get it in your own language or not in a book form, you're going to get the gospel. Right now we've got stories in the modern era, in particular, stories that are much more easy to understand as to how the Gospel got there, we can trace it. But I'm not going to buy the guy who says I'm not getting in the lifeboat because I'm really concerned about the guys, you know, in cabin 452. You know, I'm not sure if they've heard yet. So I'm saying your eternity is at stake, get in the lifeboat. That's my short answer to that.

Question My question is since we concentrate so much on showing proof that we've been saved, many times I hear people say, "Well, I went to camp and got saved," truly repented, got saved, they live for God for a while and then they live in this world as well, so they backslide. They come back and say I didn't show the fruit, therefore I must not be saved. So, they go and get saved again. I think there is some fallacy to that. Can you explain that?

Pastor Mike That's right. Because I would never describe it the way you just did. They got saved, they backslid, they got saved again. I think that you should be very careful about trying to judge

the people's hearts who are telling you in the tank, you know what? I responded to the emotionalism of camp or to the pressure of my friends or, you know, to some emotional worship night or whatever, and so I made a commitment, or I did some thing, but then I live for myself and now I'm telling you I'm saved. It can make you look at every expression of piety or response to the gospel with skepticism. But I would say you've got to stand back and say, OK, I guess they're telling me their story from their perspective. And if they are, I know this about Scripture, that we are his house if we are faithful, I'm quoting now Hebrews Chapter 2.

Pastor Mike So, I am part of God's family if I endure. So, it's not "I will be part of God's family if I endure" but "I am part of God's family if I endure" and they're telling me I didn't endure. I had some encounter with God or the gospel and then I walked away from it and then now I'm telling you I'm a Christian. The fallacy is not in the gospel being preached to bear fruit because the Bible's very clear, that's how you'll know them by their fruit. Right? Paul preached "repent and bear fruit in keeping with repentance." John the Baptist said "hey, repent," and they said, "What should we do?" And he started saying here's all the things you ought to do in response to that. So faith bears fruit. Back to James Chapter 2, we were talking about at the beginning.

Pastor Mike So it's not the fault of the gospel, it's not the fault of the preaching, it's not the fault of people saying question your faith to see if you're of the faith, test yourself to see if you're of the faith. It really is an honest expression of people who like to think they're in with God and any move toward God I'm going to think, "Hey, maybe I thought I was saved." I would say, let's respect their testimonies and let's not be overly skeptical, even of this time. Let's recognize that this issue of being in or thinking I'm in and not really being in is frequently addressed throughout the Scripture. Right?

Pastor Mike Jesus talked about the four soils. He talked about the person "receiving the word with joy." Right? "But then the riches and cares of the world choked it all out and became unfruitful." Well, do we say, "Well, I don't want to hear again? You had your chance at being a Christian." Right? No, those people get saved down the road and they get in the tank and they say, "Hey, I received the word with joy at camp three years ago, but now I'm here to tell you I got it right now." See? All I can do is trust their testimony. And I'm not going to stop preaching the gospel and say, "Hey, prove your repentance by your deeds. That's a biblical thing." And you can stand back and skeptically cross your arms and say, "Well, I don't know. I'm not buying all this. There must be some wrong with the gospel at that church." There's not.

Pastor Mike As a matter fact, when you start to say to people, "Hey you walk an aisle once, you raise your hand at a camp, don't tell me about some other encounter down the road." Right? I think you're giving people a lot of false assurance. So, I'm going to stick with preaching the gospel and calling people to bear fruit in keeping with repentance and to prove their repentance by their deeds. Those are both biblical words from Acts 26, Luke Chapter 6.

Pastor Mike So, yeah, I hear you though, that happens. Because how many people do you meet on the street who say, "Yeah, I'm going to hell for sure." Right? I don't think there's anybody who genuinely becomes a Christian who hadn't started out thinking, "Well, I think I'm fine with God." And then they get convicted by the Word and realize they're not. And you add church to the mix

and you talk about people getting baptized on our platform talking about camp. I think you brought up camp. These are church kids. And I was a church kid. I was a president of my youth group. I learned the verses. I earned the football. I went on the summer camps. I wasn't saved but ask me when I was 15, "Are you saved?" Ask me when I was 12, "Are you saved." I'd say, "Of course I'm saved. Yeah." You add church to the mix of people and people generally like to think they're good with God, you're going to have a lot of that kind of story. So we're going to hang with it and every time they get baptized we're going to applaud, we're not going to say they were saved and got saved again. We're going to say they thought they were saved but now they're saying they really are. And since I can't get in their brain, I going to have to trust their testimony.

Question My question is the word social justice is everywhere. Right? We can see it in even the evangelical circles. We see it in the book Woke Church by Eric Mason.

Pastor Mike Wow. Hope you're not spending too much time reading that book.

Question There's a valid Statement on Social Justice authored by Pastor MacArthur. Can you comment on these two publications as well as the biblical view of social justice at the church?

Pastor Mike Well as other guys have said, even those guys, some of those guys who crafted and signed that, I don't think justice needs an adjective or a modifier. Right? Biblical justice is what we're all about. We're all about justice. The moniker "social justice" obviously has come to mean some things that in our minds should never result in the book Woke Church. Right? So I'm against that. I'm in favor of the statement. I understand how sometimes the statement can be used as a club and can be divisive. I'm not interested in that. That's why you haven't heard me preach in those terms. Hopefully, you can look at my preaching and listen to what I'm presenting in Scripture and saying, Mike believes in us acting justly and doing justice and doing what is right and biblical.

Pastor Mike What I'm not into is trying to shame you for having some kind of injustice in your heart when you don't know it and don't express it and you should feel guilty and the sign that you really are guilty is claiming you're not guilty in this. Right? I don't want to be told I'm a racist or anything else if you have no evidence and the only evidence you have is that I'm of the wrong ethnic group or I am claiming I don't have it.

Pastor Mike And here's the thing about the whole social justice thing. In California, I sure hope in Southern California particularly, we have less of an affinity to... I hope we're ahead of the curve on this part of it. In evangelical churches like ours that teach the Bible, I hope you're recognizing that the things that they might be dealing with in Georgia or Tennessee right now as they're figuring out where they're at in the church, they're kind of wrapped up in something, at least in my life, I've known nothing of growing up here in Southern California. Right? I mean, I know nothing of any kind of systemic, you know, prejudicial thoughts toward people who don't have the same skin color as me. I just don't and I never have. I deal with people on a regular basis here that, I mean, I disciple them, I mentor them, I get to know them. I just don't see that as a general pattern here. I don't think I can be trying to do some kind of making amends for something that my ancestors did. Matter of fact, my dad got a free genetic kit thing and found out, I mean, he's more

of Native American than he is anything else. So, I should've gone to college for free now that I figured that out.

Pastor Mike I'm thinking to myself, ultimately, what does that matter? In the end I'm just saying I'm not going to use any thing about my ethnicity to drive wedges. In our church, just like I would hope in every church, we should get back to realizing we're all about the gospel, we are about justice, we're all about truth, we're all about righteousness, we're all about God's Word and holiness. But I think this has been a major distraction in a lot of churches today. I understand there are others who have a great weight of guilt in their own hearts regarding this. I don't have it and I don't have it and that's not proof that I should have it. It's that you'd have to point to something substantive. What is the problem?

Pastor Mike And you can't do it by looking at, "Well, I've seen your church composition." Right? Stop. Just, to me... I mean, I'm about to go off on this. It's a good question. It's a great question. But I'm just sick and tired of me being accused of something that is not true. And again, no not personally, they're not coming after me. I mean, now they will maybe, but I'm just... Yeah. We're reaching our community. Right? The diversity in our church is going to be whatever our community is. Right? I'm not sitting here trying to meet quotas about, you know, how many people I have from this group or that group. Everyone is welcome here to learn the Word. Our issues are about biblical concerns. Social justice, reparations, all of that, is not my concern. Yeah. I hope you're reading that book just for reference and not because you're buying into that. I assume you're not. Yeah.

Question So, my question is there are many Bible verses which lead you to think that people who are dead, believers and unbelievers, are asleep. And of course there's Luke 23:43 where Jesus says to the criminal, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." I'm just wondering if believers who are dead are now asleep or in heaven.

Pastor Mike They say that every cell in your body is different. I mean, they all change in progressive ways but the substance of your body is not what it was seven years ago. You can't even find, you know, cells... This may be old data so maybe it's more than that. In other words, here's the point. You are not your body. You are the immaterial part. You happen to exist within a body. You happen to be enmeshed in a body, encased in a body, but you are not your body. When Jesus said, "Today you'll be with me in paradise," or Paul says, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord," Second Corinthians 5, or he says, "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain," I don't know which to choose, Philippians Chapter 1. All of these statements are about a conscious person being somewhere else. If I die today I'm leaving my body behind and guess what it looks like? It looks like it's in repose as they say. The body is lying in state or lying in repose.

Pastor Mike So the euphemism came up and has come up in biblical times to talk about being asleep. Right? Now clearly, everything about what Jesus taught and what Paul taught talked about being wide awake when you're dead. Right? "Today you'll be with me in paradise," not today you're going to go to sleep. Or for me to die is gain because I'm going to go to sleep and I'm really tired. This is about a conscious awareness. Jesus tells a parable about the rich man and Lazarus.

The day they die their body goes in the grave and their spirit goes to be somewhere else. Their "software," their consciousness, their awareness.

Pastor Mike So, sleep is a euphemism. You might say, I don't know if people say this anymore, "kick the bucket." It's a bad euphemism but it's a euphemism for dying. Right? "To pass away," that's one that's very common, to pass away. No one's passing anything. Right? It's a euphemism. You don't want to say "you died" or "they died." That just seems too harsh so we soften it with these words and it becomes socially acceptable. In the Bible the socially acceptable euphemism for dying is asleep. So don't think that that constitutes any foundation for the Doctrine of Soul Sleep like many groups teach, the Adventists, the Jehovah Witnesses and other. I don't believe in soul sleep because there's too much evidence, clearly in Scripture, of people being awake and conscious after they die. That's what the Bible teaches. All the passages about sleeping refer to the observation of the body, which has an appearance of sleep, which is a euphemistic way to talk about, a nice way to talk about, the fact that they've actually died.

Question Regarding church discipline and church membership, I have two questions. First, church discipline. You know, the Bible gives us a clear model of how that should be applied, but there has been conflict with church members who don't see that is being applied as theologically accurately as it should be. So where do you see that the conflict is between the attendees and the way the church discipline is being applied today in our church. My second question is regarding church membership. Should professing Christians who are not repentant be members of the church and if so will that be compromising the truth in any way, having non-repentant Christians.

Pastor Mike That's "members." Yeah. Which every church has even those that have a very formalized practice of having classes and application forms and interviews with elders or deacons or whoever might be, they've got unregenerate people carrying membership files around. So, the question of membership and church discipline. Let's talk about churches discipline. What is church discipline? Church discipline is a church looking at an unrepentant part of their church, which by the way there is a synonym for the word member - part. That's what the word means, a part. A member of your body is a part of your body. So a part of a church if it is in unrepentant sin the church is supposed to confront them, and if there's no repentance then they're supposed to, to use an old Amish word, they're supposed to shun them. They're supposed to not welcome them anymore until they change their status and say I'm no longer a Christian, I want to learn more about Christ so I can become a Christian, or they change their behavior and they repent. Then you can welcome them back into the congregation.

Pastor Mike That's called church discipline. And we engage in church discipline here in our church. If we have an unrepentant person who's a part of our church and as a part of our church, they are in unrepentant sin, and we say to them, you're not welcome here anymore until you repent, change your status or change your behavior. And so, we have church discipline. The question of membership is the question of what does a church decide to do to actually say, "Yes, we believe that you are now a member or a part of this church. We have a standard, a church down the street has a different standard, another church has a different standard, but there's no... You've inserted a word the Bible doesn't insert, "attendee." An attendee versus a member. Matter

of fact, everyone who frequently attended a church in the first century was called a part of the church, a member of the church.

Pastor Mike And so in our church our system of what we use, if you will, to be saying someone is a member of the church may be much simpler than the church you've grown up in or down the street or you can compare us to, but it doesn't solve the problem of people being a part of the church who aren't saved, there's always going to be that, the wheat and the tares Jesus said. I guess it helps some people feel like, "Well, if we ever have to discipline them at least they signed a paper that said in their membership class that they would let us do that and so maybe they won't sue us." I can guarantee this: signing the paper doesn't keep anybody from suing you when you discipline them. And secondly, there are no guidelines in the Scripture to show us what we have to do to consider someone a part of our church, a member of our church.

Pastor Mike What we're going to say is the ideal member of our church is someone who has a testimony, who's committed their life to Christ, they're involved here, not just in receiving what we give them spiritually, feeding them spiritually as the Bible puts it, but they are also engaged in ministry and they're contributing through their time and their effort and their talent and their gifts financially. That is the member part of our church. But if you come here regularly, you know, then you're a part of this church, you're a member of this church. Now there are all kinds of standards you have to sign depending on what role you play in the church. There are classes that we have like our Compass 101 class to get you oriented to the church.

Pastor Mike But, yeah, I guess I'm just going to say and maybe I'm sounding too defensive but we have membership, we have people who we say are a part of our church, we care for, we have church discipline. If you say, "Well, I've never heard you get up on the platform and discipline someone." Well, then you haven't been around very long. I shouldn't say that, you've been around long enough. We don't do that very often unless it's a public figure or someone on staff or something, which we've done. If it's someone in a smaller circle where to you it's just a name, we'll deal with them in the circles in which they run. If they're on a worship team or if they're in a kid's ministry leadership or whatever then we'll meet and deal with that person in that setting. So yeah, the standard of membership -- the Bible does not give us the standard. How many forms you have to fill out, how many pages those forms have to be, what questions you have to ask. What we're looking for is a regenerate membership, people part of your church who are regenerate. That's the goal. That's the hope. They've got a testimony and depending on your role in the church you agree to a certain set of doctrinal standards. Anyone who comes to the church is subject to church discipline. That's our role. That's what the Bible says. And we could discipline anyone in this church right now. We might do it wrongly and say to you you're not welcome to be a part of our church. We should have a good reason for it before we do it. We're very careful about when we do choose to exercise church discipline. That's the short answer though it didn't sound very short.

Question I was wondering what you thought of Pentecost. I was told that if Pentecost happens now or if people claim that there's Pentecost, so like if people start speaking in tongues, like other languages, it's demonic. And I wasn't sure if that was true or not because I don't want to also limit

God in any way. But if Pentecost was only meant for that time I just wanted to know where and how biblically, theologically...

Pastor Mike Well, you do want to limit God, I'm sure, in your behavior because I could say a lot of things that someone could stand up and do in the church and blame it on God and you'd say, no, don't do that, that's not biblical. You'd want to limit God. They could say, "Well, this just a God-thing. I'm doing a God-thing. I'm throwing knives around, it's a God-thing." And you'd say, "No, no, stop!" See? So there are a lot of things being claimed to be God-things in the Church of Corinth and Paul says, "Stop. Don't do this anymore." So, there's nothing wrong with limiting what people do even though they're claiming a god label for it as long as we know that what we're saying the limit is a biblical thing to limit.

Pastor Mike You say Pentecost, Pentecost is an Old Testament feast. It just so happens to be the time when God sent the Spirit to the apostles and they began to speak in foreign languages and everybody started to hear the wonderful works of God in their own language. There are three occurrences of speaking in other languages that were miraculously given in the book of Acts and the first one was at the day of Pentecost. Pentecostals they're called because they like to say well that's what we're doing and today they speak in ecstatic utterances. And it doesn't look anything what it seemed to look like in the three occurrences in the book of Acts. So I would say a lot of what goes on under the banner of tongues today is not what we read about in the book of Acts. The good news is that we'll be teaching in the book of Acts shortly, in about a month or so. We'll start in the book of Acts and get we'll get to Chapter 2 real soon and we'll walk through that in great detail.

Pastor Mike But I would say this: we certainly want to make sure that what we're affirming as a practice in our church is something that is biblical. We don't want to obviously prohibit anything that is biblical, but we want to make sure that what we're affirming is something that is... Moses parted the Red Sea, right? That's a biblical thing. But we're probably not going to try to have an event at the beach this afternoon to part the Red Sea. And there are reasons for that. Right? They got their bread off the lawn every morning, manna. We're not going to send you out to get your bread off the lawn. So just because we're saying something is not a practice in this church today doesn't mean we don't believe it happened or served an important role. The question is figuring out what that role was and if it's to be affirmed as a continuing manifestation of God's spirit today, or whether it had a particular role at a particular time. So we're going to walk through a lot of that in the book of Acts and we'll see it, which wasn't a satisfying answer probably but, there's my answer.

Question So, God has blessed us with three children and my oldest has been a very spiritual child. Very faith-filled. God filled. But he seems to get spiritually attacked. Nightmares, you know, where he says dark figures carve x's is in his hands and his brothers and sisters get killed. Terrible, awful things. Are there things that we as parents can do to combat this? How do we know if this is spiritual? How do we know how to make this, you know, stop?

Pastor Mike Of course we'd like to stop all the bad things that we experience or our kids experience. And you described it as a spiritual attack and then you ask how do we know if it's

spiritual. Yeah, I'd be careful about saying nightmares are spiritual attacks. Just because they're dark or they have a spiritual overtone to them doesn't mean that they're necessarily demonic attacks upon our children. So I'd be cautious about that because all you got to do is get that in the mind of our kids to freak them out even further. So, every kid has nightmares. As a pastor I hear a lot of people who are adults that have horrible nightmares and a lot of things. I'm not going to quickly rush to say, "Well, you're having a demonic attack." It's not a good thing.

Pastor Mike We'd prefer you to have sweet dreams every night, everybody. But we're going to try and figure out what the connection might be between the behavior and the input of your mind during the day and what you're experiencing at night. I'm assuming you are careful parents with a lot of restrictions and boundaries on your kid and what they're taking in. Right? But even, you know, that cannot solve the problems. Right? There are things that they're going to put together and piece together in their minds in an imaginative way that may be scary and freaky and what all, you know, even though they haven't been watching, you know, whatever the latest horror movies are. So be very careful about input, which I'm sure you are, I trust you are.

Pastor Mike The Bible says, "Whatever is true, whatever is lovely, whatever is pure, whatever is of good repute..." I think in Philippians 4, we've got to work hard to get our kids as well as our parents to have their minds saturated on good things. Beyond that there's nothing I can do when I go unconscious at night to guard myself. Right? I'm unconscious. But I can work really hard to fill my mind during the day on the good things. The Bible says that that's where our mind ought to be. I ought to make sure that I'm not anxious, I ought to be fighting anxiety. So if there's anxiety and worry that's associated with that, I certainly say we should look at the biblical mandate to try and fix that problem through the ways the Bible gives us.

Pastor Mike I would say, without freaking out your child, I would definitely talk to a pastor here as parents and get more details and I would want to learn, if I were doing the counseling, what the exposure was in the kid's life. Then I would say, you know, even if it is the fact that this kid's getting an unusual amount of difficult, scary, horrific things happening in his life, yeah, there may be some correspondence to the fact that the kid is going to be used greatly for God in some way. And I guarantee you this, as Spurgeon said, God uses very few people greatly until he hurts them badly and ministry, for instance, is a very hard, painful kind of life. This could be preparation. Right? If you got a guy who's going to do great things in athletics, he's going to spend a lot of torturous days in the gym.

Pastor Mike So, it could be that this is part of a spiritual training that God is allowing in his life to put him through some hard times to get him ready for some hard work, spiritually speaking. So, you know, I just don't know enough to answer that question. But I would definitely say, which I'm sure, I'm assuming you're doing, is certainly guard his input. I wouldn't make much of it. Even when my wife and I would go behind closed doors and really debate something that happened in the kid's mind, we're not making, you know, the investigation with the clipboard and the collar turned up and getting my kid to think that this is as big as we may think it is. I want to make sure that we put this in perspective.

Pastor Mike They're looking at you guys as the rock. Right? You guys are the perspective, the regulators, the governors of things. So you've got to stay in control without freaking out, without seeing this as some horrible thing. I would get some help, definitely, to get more of the story on the table if you wanted good pastoral advice and counsel because I just don't have enough to go on. But if it's nothing other than, yes, uncontrolled difficulties in a nighttime terror and yet the guy seems to be, the kid seems to be very spiritually-minded, maybe it is just simply that. Because there'll be a lot of horrible things that your kid will go through if God uses him greatly in ministry.