



Q&A 2021 – Part 1

Pastor Mike Fabarez

Pastor Mike: Well, after a year of missing our annual weekend Q&A, we are back this year and we're glad that we have a chance to address whatever questions you might have that you think would be helpful for your pastor to weigh in on. Something biblical, something doctrinal, theological, something related to the Christian life. And that's what we give one weekend a year to and this is the weekend. So if you came for a sermon. Sorry. This is what you get, so it'll be a patchwork of sermon concepts, how about that? All right, we got three guys with microphones who are going to wander around. They're going to hang on to the microphone so you don't need to take it in your hand. But I would like you to stand up, speak into that microphone and ask whatever question you might have. And as one person is asking a question and I'm answering it, just be sure to wave down someone else who has got a microphone that should be free here in the room. So let's just dive right in. Why don't we? And we will see what your first question is. I see hands up back there. I think I did. Yeah, in the back. I always got a start in the back, don't we? So we'll see what this looks like this year and while we're going to the back with Pastor Rod we've got two more microphones here. Once we get a question asked here, will pass the microphone around. Be sure to wave them down while this is going on. Yeah. Hi. Fire away.

Question: Yeah. So one of my friends just was talking with her and she told me that she's a Christian. We've had all these doctrinal conversations together and one day she tells me that she has same-sex attraction. I'm just wondering, I mean, it kind of caught me off guard while we were talking. I'm just curious, how would you advise someone who is in the church but struggles with that sin?

Pastor Mike: Yeah, well, I think we need to treat it as we would any serious sin because it is a serious sin to transgress what God has laid out as the sexual boundaries and sexual expressions. So if someone had a confession to make about some other sexual sin, we would address it in the same way. And that is that we want there to be confession and repentance and accountability and that can be provided in the body of Christ. And I think that's how we approach it. It doesn't matter if the world wants to applaud this particular sin, as they're doing now and everyone's cheering everybody on for engaging in it. God is clear. He's revealed his word. We're all going to answer to him. So, yeah, it's securing confession, which is agreeing with God that it's wrong, which is really one of the hardest steps in our modern culture. Repentance, which is forsaking it and saying it's wrong and I'm turning from it. And accountability, the body of Christ helping these people work through whatever their problem might be. If I have a serious temptation and attraction to steal things and be a shoplifter or beat my wife or whatever it might be, you're going to be there as an accountability partner. And I hope if it's not going well with your accountability, then you seek to broaden the circle and have someone else who might be better at this to step in and help you provide that accountability. All right. We've got another question?

Question: Hi, Pastor Mike. I have a question when in First Timothy 2:12, it says women aren't supposed to teach men or have authority, excess authority over them. How do you explain colleges that are Christian colleges that are teaching biblical stuff to men and women?



Pastor Mike: When a woman is a professor, for instance, in a college, right. Yeah. And there's a good, debatable discussion to have. We believe, as I think most people who have a high view of Scripture believe, although I should be careful with even saying that, that the pastoral authority, the teaching post in the church is a gender-specific role. You have to be a man to be an elder, "Presbyteros," an appointment, a pastor, "Episkopos," the Greek word, an overseer, bishop. So we don't have women pastors like some famous churches down the road. We say that is a gender-exclusive issue because every time we see that come up, whether it's First Corinthians 11, First Timothy 2, the requirements for an elder in Titus Chapter 1, First Timothy 3. All of these passages talk about the issue of male leadership in the church in that top role of the authority over the mixed congregation of men and women being exclusively tied to the creation order. And that doesn't change and that's not cultural. Therefore, we're stuck with that. Just like God has said women are going to have babies and men are not going to have babies. When it comes to the distinguishing of roles in the church, God wants men and he roots that in a creation pattern to be male.

Pastor Mike: Now, in the universities, when you're going to teach someone to become a pastor, for instance, that may not be the exclusive role of that school. Think about it right. You could have a school that is a Christian school teaching students to become all kinds of things within the breadth of Christendom doing all kinds of things within the church. I don't see a problem with having female professors who are teaching in that organization because they're preparing people for all kinds of things. If you now had a pastoral ministries class that is taught by a female, I think, OK, that to me doesn't make sense as something that you would do. We wouldn't do that at Compass Bible Church, for instance, because it's a gender-specific role. And I think there's a denial of the complementary roles when you make that decision within a school. So it will depend on what they teach. If you're teaching Greek paradigms, even, you know, every pastor needs to learn Greek and Hebrew. You know, there are some great female linguists who could teach that in a school and I don't think that's an issue. Now, good men and women disagree with me on that. But I just think when it comes to pastoral theology, pastoral leading, expository preaching classes, I think that should be led by men even in the university's Bible schools and seminaries.

Pastor Mike: But, yeah, you look at any Christian liberal arts college, even if they have a high view of the distinguishing of genders within the leadership of the Church, in other words, they believe that the pastorate is male-only allowed in Scripture. They're training people for all kinds of things. And you could see a Christian liberal arts college having several female professors teaching a variety of topics. So that's not an issue. And women, you need to realize this is an issue of authoritative teaching in the Church over men and women. That's very different than women, for instance, in our church, we have great expositors who teach here hundreds of women every week. They're great expositors. They teach women as Titus says, right? The older women. In that sense, the idea of the mature and learned teaching the younger, those that can receive that instruction. So we're not about limiting women in ministry. It's just the specific role of the exercising of authority in the church setting in a mixed congregation.



Question: Hi, Mike. This is John. I really want to say that I feel privileged being close to so many Christians who are excited about God and Jesus. However, I've just become a great fake Christian because I don't feel that same way.

Pastor Mike: Don't feel the same way as what?

Question: I'm not born again. I've experienced a lot of this fallen world, struggles and unbelievable pain and people say, "Sweet Jesus." And I think I live in the real world. I just don't see Jesus' or God's love for me.

Pastor Mike: You don't see that he loves you? That's what you're saying, right? Well, if you're always going to measure whether or not God loves you based on how much suffering he's willing to put in your life, then yeah, you're right. You'll never believe that God loves you because your life's going to be full of pain, disease and then you're going to die. So if that's your measure of God's love, then you're going to believe that God does not love you. I believe that God loves me. I have plenty of pain. Maybe not as much as yours. Plenty of disappointment, plenty of opposition, plenty of criticism. I'm going to get sick and die or be in a terrible accident and then I'm going to die. Plenty of suffering ahead for me. I'm not measuring whether or not God loves me based on how much pain he allows in my life. That's just not how it works in the Bible. But God says he has promised us pain. Matter of fact, his most treasured servants in the Scripture suffered greatly. So I think you've got to make sure that you're not using that as the benchmark as to whether or not God loves you, how much pain he's brought into your life. I'd say there's a lot of Christians in this room who live in the real world. I think we all do. Not many monks here or nuns. We would love to talk to you afterwards about how you can live in the real world, experience the pain that God has appointed for us, and yet still recognize God's love. And that all comes down to, humanly speaking, your response to that. So I think a personal conversation and I'm sure there are a few people on the edge of their seat who would love to talk to you afterwards about how to work through that. Thank you, John.

Question: Hi, pastor. A question. How can one justify the celebration of Christmas and Easter when they're historically rooted in paganism, especially when God has specifically said not to worship him as other gods?

Pastor Mike: Yeah, what is today, by the way? What is today? What day of the week is it?

Question: Saturday.

Pastor Mike: Are you a pagan?

Question: I'm not.

Pastor Mike: Why do you worship Saturn?

Question: Well, that would be...



Pastor Mike: You called it Saturday. Why would you use the word Saturday, which is based on the worship of Saturn?

Question: Correct. It's off the Roman calendar, not the Jewish.

Pastor Mike: Why are you using the Roman calendar? I ask you what day it was, you use the Roman enumeration of the day. See, here's my point. Making my point. My point is you're assigning guilt by association. OK, you're wearing a ball cap. Do you know who designed the ball cap? Do you know why people wore it indoors, for instance, men did. Do you have any clue? If I expose the background to that, see, would you then say, "Oh, I can't do that anymore?" You could if your conscience was violated. And I understand that. And if you don't want to celebrate Easter or Christmas, don't. Right? "Whatever is not of faith it's sin," Romans 14. So you're not obligated in any way as a Christian to do those things. But knowledge should not take from you things that you can glorify God in, like wearing a ball cap, like saying I'll meet you for church Saturday night. All of that can be utilized. That's called redeeming those things for God's glory. So the Bible says if you want to escape association with evil, Paul said you'd have to leave the world. And since that's not our calling to leave the world, it's to live in the world, he says that's all we can do is redeem the pagan things around us. There's nothing wrong with Christmas. It is a celebration of, I mean, it's Christ's mass. I get that. That's Roman Catholic some would say. Fine, we're not Catholics. I'm not going to a mass on December 25, but I'm going to celebrate the incarnation of Christ. You should not, according to Romans 14, you should not judge me for that because you're not my master. And the Bible says you have no right to do that. So all the arguments that are made from the book of Jeremiah, that take cutting down a tree and setting it up as your god. That's what we're doing with the Christmas tree. All of that is just super bad hermeneutics. It's not what the Bible teaches. And I can play guilt by association all day long with you. I can talk about the homosexual that made your coffee table, for instance, if I found that out. I could do research and absolutely paralyze your life if your standard is guilt by association. If you are associated with something that has a pagan root, then I can't do it. And that's not how we can live the Christian life. That's not how we're taught to live the Christian life. Also go into the marketplace and eat whatever is put before you, even if it was dedicated to a god. Right? Now, I'm not going to do it if someone is stumbling and say, "Here, eat this meat that was sacrificed to an idol." So I'm not going to say, "Hey, I know you're stumbling over Christmas. I'm going to invite you over to my house. We're going to sing Christmas carols and decorate the tree." Fine. You don't have to come to my house on Christmas and you don't have to even call it Christmas, but you can't say, well, Christians can't utilize that, sanctify that, redeem that for the glory of God. Because if you do that, all I'm saying is we can go all day long and you'll be in a robe in your closet with your knees against your chest saying I can't do anything because it's all associated with paganism, because so many things are. Sitting in church at one time was considered wrong. And here you are sitting in church. They had no chairs in church. You stood in church. I mean, we could talk about why those things came to be and the compromises that people said their music. Right? Even the way we did music. Gregorian chants were assumed to be holy because they were not melodic. There was something about the expression of reverence. And now all of a sudden, we don't care. Why? Because you



don't make the guilt by association. Well, at a time they did when Martin Luther used barroom tunes and brought them into the church, put Christian lyrics on it, people stumbled over that. You didn't even think about that if we sang "Mighty Fortress Is Our God" tonight. So all I'm saying is, do not live your life by guilt by association. Just because something has a pagan origin like Sunday tomorrow morning and I call it Sunday, even though it was a worship of the sun, the Roman calendar was all about that. I'm not worshipping the sun tomorrow. I'm worshipping Jesus Christ. So I'm just saying you can't play the game. Those who play the game play it very selectively and they impose their knowledge and sometimes I find, and I'm not saying it's you because you may be asking for someone else, it's a lot of pride. They taunt, "I know something you don't know. I know about Samhain. I know about, you know, the Druids. I know about, you know, the veneration of evergreen trees." Yeah, we can uncover knowledge and you can say you're smarter than me because you know it. But once you know it, if you're saying because it has an association with a pagan root, I can't do it and I'm saying you don't want to start that. So redeem it for the glory of God. But if you have a conscience problem then don't do it. Don't do it. Some people will not come to church here on Saturday because they grew up with this high, reformed view of Sunday as the replacement of the Sabbath, which was a command in Exodus 20. Therefore, they can't come to church, it violates their conscience. It doesn't violate my conscience. And like Romans 14 says, "Some people may consider one day as more important than the other and everybody else says they're all the same. Let each person be convinced in his own mind." But you can't judge another man's servant on those secondary issues. And he says don't quarrel about those things. So when someone says, "I think Christmas trees are pagan," I'm saying, well, then you better not be buying one, right? But I'm going to go and I hope I get a good deal on one. I mean, you just need to say, "Oh, then, you know, the Lord bless you." Right? Because it's not a guilt by association game. And sometimes new knowledge does that to us. I'd say just in time you'll recognize everything can be traced with dots to paganism or Satan or the world or worship of Caesar or whatever it might be. That would be my answer to that.

Question: Hi, Pastor Mike. How do I tell a non-Christian or a Christian that they're sinning without offending them?

Pastor Mike: You often cannot. Yeah, you often cannot. Yeah, and really, offense, there are ways you can make sure you do offend them by saying it really rudely and insensitively. But I would say this, how would I want someone to point out sin to me knowing I want to please the Lord, how would I want someone to do that to me, OK? I wouldn't want them to come up and say it tersely and turn around and walk off and call me a name. I would want them to try and help me see that in a way that would be a little bit more respectful, a little bit more sympathetic. That's what the Bible says when there is someone who's caught in a trespass, you who are spiritual, you restore them, but you ought to do it very carefully, keeping an eye on yourself. So I just think we need to be careful how we do it. But if my goal is, kind of like John was asking, if my goal is I will only do this if they don't get offended, then you'll never do what God asks us to do, because you need to. Right? If you love someone depending on the relationship and where you are, if you have a friend and they're in sin, you need to point it out to them. You may offend them. Nathan went to David and he laid out, he was strategic and thoughtful and laid out a parable and said, that's you, David. And God had prepared David to



be able to say you're right and led him to repentance. And that's what you're praying for. And you don't want to win the argument, instead want to win the person, win them over. And that I think it's about motive. But no, you're going to offend people. Do your best to make sure it's the truth that offends them.

Question: Pastor Mike, how would you address the question if someone says, if God knows everything, why do I need to pray about anything. And if I pray for something more than once, am I just babbling and not trusting in God?

Pastor Mike: Yeah. Jesus said you should always pray and never give up. He said seek and I will let myself be found, back in the Old Testament. The New Testament he says, "Seek and knock and ask and I'll answer, I'll open the door and I'll give it to you." So you ask why? Because God said to. It'd be like my kid when I said clean your room. If he's got all these reasons why that doesn't make any sense. Right? If I said, "Vacuum the floor," and they said, "Well, I know I just learned that you just told mom we're going to rip the carpet up next year." I don't care what you know and what you think you know about my plan. I've asked you to do something. And the reason I pray is because God asked me to pray. And the reason I repeat my prayers is because God asked me to. He also tells me to check my motives. And when Paul in Second Corinthians 12 prays about this thorn in the flesh, he says he prayed three times and then he got it, like God's grace is going to be sufficient. There's a reason for this. It's about humbling me. And he stopped asking. Moses kept asking about going into the Promised Land. And at one point, I mean, he's had the advantage of having this relationship with God like face-to-face, that's how it was described. But God said to him, "Stop asking me that." So there's a time to stop praying, but you've got to have a reason to stop praying, like I think God wants me to stop praying. The default is keep praying, always keep praying, keep praying. Check your motives, but keep praying. So, yeah, we can play games with God and say, if you know what's going to happen, why would I ever pray? If you've determined this all, why? Because he told you to. You know, I've had seminary students say to me, "Well, if God is going to save whoever he's chosen to save, why would I ever share the gospel with him? Why am I going to share the gospel to them if they're dead in their trespasses and sins? I can't convince them, God's going to have to do it. So why would I do it?" Well, because God said. He's not only appointed the end, the purpose, he's also appointed the means and the means is prayer, and the other analogy the means is evangelism. So we do what he tells us to do. And what he tells us to do is to pray and to keep on praying and never lose heart. Unless, of course, it's a bad motive that's uncovered. James Chapter 4. Right? You want to spend it on your pleasures. Second Corinthians 12, you find out that, "No, I think there's a reason here that I should stop praying because I see why it's happening and I see God's will in this," and then I stop. So, yeah, but you keep praying because he told us to. And if that's too simple, I'm just saying you can have a theological thought about God's sovereignty or his providence, but you can use that theological thought in an unbiblical way. Don't use biblical truths in unbiblical ways. And I know you're using, someone is, I mean, theoretically, a biblical truth in an unbiblical way when they stop doing what the Bible clearly says.

Question: I listen to songs and stuff we sing here recently. I've seen the words "wait upon the Lord" in quite a few of them. I just want to make sure I understand it correctly, because it



seems pretty simple just to be patient. But is that all it is or is there more to waiting on the Lord?

Pastor Mike: Yeah, I mean, there is more biblically to the phrase and there's an active sense of dependence and trust and expression of trust. Waiting for us is such a passive activity. But waiting is in Scripture a more active involvement in expressing my trust in God, even in praying, for instance, right? To always persist in prayer. Right? Those kinds of truths are reminding us that as we wait, we are, here's a strong word in English, "beseeching" this great Greek word. It's a strong word. I'm waiting, but I'm not waiting passively. I'm waiting with not only an act of trust, but I'm waiting with involved prayer and engaged hearts. And so, yeah, waiting on the Lord is clearly related to time. I'm saying God is going to come through but I'm not going to lose heart. I just finished writing a little something for Focal Point and a bunch of the Psalms and so many of the Psalms, I kept going and picking a bunch of these I wanted to write on and so many of them just deal with that issue. It goes from, even Psalm 73 is a good example, a passivity of frustration. "This isn't working out for me," and then by the end of the psalm, it's like, "OK, I get it now." And the working through of that, why God is not answering my prayers, gets to the end of like he's worked through the waiting. Right? He's shifted his mind and his thoughts and he was doubting and now he's trusting and he was passive and hopeless and now he's hopeful and he's confident. That's the kind of shifting around of our own hearts in waiting on the Lord that I think in Scripture is informing that it's a much more active thing than a passive thing. Like if you're standing in the DMV line, you're waiting passively. Right? I'm not doing anything to make this thing move forward. I'm not really working on anything. It's different when we're waiting on the Lord to come through on a situation. Yeah, that's a good question and maybe a good commentary even on any of the passages that deal with the phrase "waiting on the Lord." Right? Isaiah 40 is a classic example. A good commentary in Isaiah, one of our books and our commentaries in our Compass Bible Institute library, those would dig into that idea, especially in the Hebrew concept of waiting actively.

Question: Yeah, hey, Pastor Mike. I'm new, I've only been here for about six weeks, but so my question might be a little elementary, but the Bible said that faith without works is dead. Can you explain the relationship between faith, works and salvation? And then as a follow-up, how does one know that they are saved?

Pastor Mike: Right. By your question... the works. Yeah, and the way we describe it around here is that a lot of the cult groups are clearly teaching that if you have the truth of the gospel and you respond rightly to it with faith and then you do good works, then that equals salvation. That's how the cults said it. So a lot of the people in response to that in the evangelical world trying to keep grace intact, "No, this is a free gift to God." They started to teach. Well, no, it's the gospel and you responding rightly to it by trusting in him and that equals salvation and stop talking to me about good works. But the biblical equation to be rightly balanced is to say it's the gospel of truth about Christ. It's trusting in that. That equals salvation. But the only way the equation adds up is if with that salvation you have good works. And so that equation adds up biblically. The cultic equation of the works being before the equal sign, that does not add up. The evangelical response in trying to protect grace does not add up by saying, "Oh, it's



just the gospel plus faith and that equals salvation. It doesn't matter about your life." No, it does matter about your life. If you don't have the works produced out of that, in other words, if your life is not changed, the trajectory of your life is not changed, then according to the book of First John, you're lying to yourself and you're lying to everybody else. So works have to be a part of the equation, right? Even the thief on the cross who hardly had any time to produce any works is there trying to rebuke the other criminal for dissing on Christ. I mean, he didn't get any baptism. He never gave a check to the synagogue or to the church. He did no life of charity. But even in his last moments, he gets saved at the end of his life and he's starting to show that his life has changed.

Pastor Mike: I prayed for this guy and went to his nursing home and shared the gospel to him because the daughter went to our church and said, "Please go share the gospel with him. I've tried everything." And so I went and he knew he had only a few days to live and I shared with him and he put his trust in Christ. Well, that was weird. You know, he's heard this from his family for so long. But I show up and he puts his trust in Christ. He dies like four days later. And I think I did his funeral, as I recall, this was many years ago. The family members told me the people who were there in the nursing home and the nurses who worked with him in this place saw such a radical difference during the last four days of his life. And it was like, there's a good example of the fact how many good works do you have to do to be saved. Zero. But to be saved is then to begin producing good works, right? And so that's the equation. And if that's the case, a lot of people say to me in my evangelism, "Then I just want to get saved at the end of my life. I'll just get saved at the end because it's not about good works." OK. No. Because, number one, there are two problems with that. Number one, you don't know when you're going to die, right? Those stories are neat when you know your end is coming and you can do deathbed conversions. That would be really cool. But the Bible says, according to First Corinthians 3, the works that we do between our conversion and our home-going are building up for us all these treasures and we're going to want those, by the way. Just like you would say, "Well, I just want to be an American and be free." Great. I think you'd want money to pay your mortgage and food and it would be nice to eat better food than, you know, Top Ramen or whatever. So you got rewards that will matter in eternity. And the Bible says that you want to produce as many as you can. Jesus, put it this way, "Store up for yourselves treasure in heaven." How do you do that? Well, by doing good works. Ephesians 2:8 and 9, classic text, "Saved by grace, faith, not of ourselves, not as a result of works, that no one should boast." And we've finished with verse 9, but it keeps going. "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works." That's the point. That's why he can say in James Chapter 2, "Faith without works is dead. Can that faith save him?" It's a rhetorical question. The answer is no. Why? Because real faith has works. We're saved by faith alone. Right? But saving faith is never alone. It always brings good works. And the whole contrast there is the demons, they believe, they have good theology, but they are not converted and real converted hearts produce good works. That is not too fundamental of a question. That question could be asked every week and we need to hear it. Yeah, great question.

Question: Another question. So my buddy at work, we've been talking for about two weeks and he's a professing believer and he believes that with the atonement of Christ, there's physical healing here and now and spiritual healing. And so my response was that I agree



with him, but not that it's here now but eschatology, after the resurrection, we're healed partly because of the atonement. He didn't buy that answer. So how would you answer someone who says that?

Pastor Mike: Take him to a cemetery and walk him through it and say, "I wonder how many people believed like you did that are here?" Because I'm thinking, when do I stop saying, "OK, the healing is no longer in the atonement because I died?" I mean, I just think death is the problem with that theology, right? At what point do I say, "Oh, it's no longer in the atonement, the healing." If healing is in the atonement then we're going to have some really super old two-thousand-year-old Christians. Right? But we don't. Why? Because the healing you think is in the atonement is in the Atonement, First Corinthians 15, it's called the resurrected body that's impervious to disease and death. So, yes, there is healing in the atonement, but it's not here and now. And that to me is overturned not only by every experience the Christian has had for the last 2,000 years, but even within the pages of Scripture. The passage I quoted, Second Corinthians 12. The thorn in the flesh. Where's the healing? Right? Here is Timothy with a stomach problem. Paul has to say, "Hey, take some medicinal use of this wine for your stomach and your frequent ailments." This is his protege. Why isn't he saying your healing is in the atonement? It doesn't even come close to squaring with anything in the narrative of the New Testament. And it's all simply a quotation of Isaiah 53. "By his stripes we were healed." Yeah, we are healed. Right? Just like we were enslaved and now we're free. We're not talking about a literal enslavement. We're not talking about a literal illness. We're talking about the fact that I was dead in Christ, I was diseased with sin and now I'm not. And all of that, will it be actually literally realized? Of course it will in the resurrection. But I just have a problem with people saying that is I think, well, how long does that theology last? How long is it going to last for you? Until you're 200? Maybe? No. And that's why I just think it's such... it's so short-sighted, right? Yes. In the Atonement is purchased a brand-new world. But the world still has hurricanes. Right? Just like is a new world order in the Atonement? Yes. Well, why don't you claim that around your house so it never rains on your house or you never have a storm? It just doesn't follow. It's the most self-defeating argument because there are no three-hundred-year-old Pentecostals around.

Question: I was just wondering how to explain how predestination and free will can coincide, because to me it just kind of gets a little confusing.

Pastor Mike: It gets confusing because it is confusing but it doesn't mean it's not true. Any more than if I were to say to you, God is eternal. And I ask you, what was he doing two million years ago and how long had he been there two million years ago? You'd be like, that's starting to hurt my head. Let's go 10 trillion years ago, 10 trillion years ago, what was God doing? Right? Wasn't he bored by that point because he'd been there for how long? Well, I don't know. And the way I like to illustrate that is how long does it take you to climb out of a bottomless pit? It takes you forever. You can never get out. So that's hard for us because we live within this temporal reality of time. And how can I say God is eternal. Now no one seems to struggle with that when we sing a song about God's eternality. But once we start talking about his sovereignty, now I've got a problem because I don't want to have him determine what I'm having for lunch tomorrow. I want to determine that. "Well, wait a minute, if he's



sovereignly controlled all that, then I feel like am I a robot? That just not how it feels." Right? You feel your way through time. That should be a struggle with a lot of doctrines, right? You feel your way through math class even and you're like, I don't think three equals one. There are a lot of doctrines that blow our brains when it comes to understanding the nature of God. And here's one. God works everything after the counsel of his will, and yet he's created you and he's got a plan for you and you are going to make decisions along the way and he's going to hold you accountable for those decisions because they're going to be real decisions. How do you make real decisions and God still be sovereign? Well, I know how people try to solve it very simply, "God looked ahead and saw what I would do, and then he decided to do that." But if you want your God to be that small, OK. I don't think that's the God of the Bible though. God does not make his will subservient to our will. Some say, "Well, I don't want his will to be superior to my will." My will can be superior to your will tonight and I can take a gun and kill you and guess what? All your decisions are over from now on. "You mean my will can somehow violate your will?" Happens every day. Read the crime blotter. Right? There are people dead today because someone exercised their free will. God has the freest free will because he can decide to do whatever he wants. He decides to do what he wants and yes, that in the long run we look at and say God accomplishes what he wants to accomplish. And I have a will and though it's free in the sense that I choose to do what I choose to do, and I'm so free in that decision that God holds me accountable for it, it's all working after God's sovereign plan. How does that work? And if you want to ask that question, read Romans 9, 10 and 11. And in that discussion, God says exactly what all of us are going to say. If God hardened Pharaoh's heart so that God could have this big splash of ten miracles in the ten plagues and bring them into the wilderness and write the first five books of the Old Testament, and all of this can be for his glory, how can you still hold Pharaoh accountable for his hardening of his heart? And Paul's answer is the next 32 chapters of Romans. Right? No. He says, "Who are you to answer back to God?" Right? Same thing in Job. Job keeps saying, why did this happen to me? And God shows up in Chapter 38 and goes, "Who are you to answer back to me?" Just like if you had two hamsters in a cage that are sitting saying, "Why do those hamsters in the bushes," if there are such things, let's call them rats, "and they get to do what they want and you put me here?" All I'm saying is God has the right to do what he wants with the creatures that he makes. He decided when you'd be born, what kind of freedom is your will if you can't even choose when you're going to be born? Right? Well, it's a will that's very much smaller than God's. So here's the thing. I like to put it this way. God's will is not contingent on or subordinate to my will. He doesn't look forward and watch what happens and then goes back and said, well, that's what I'm going to plan. Right? I think my will is subordinate to his, but it is genuine enough for God to say you're culpable, that means you're guilty and responsible if you choose the wrong thing. And even in our Christian life, you will be rewarded if you do the right thing. So it's a problem. But I would recommend a couple of books to you. Here's the first one I would recommend and I think it's a helpful one because everyone's going to get down to the question I've already asked rhetorically, and that is, "Why should I share the gospel if God's already decided who's going to be saved?" And I would read a little book by J.I. Packer if you haven't read it yet. It's called "Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God." "Evangelism and the Sovereignty God." I'm sure it's in our bookstore. You can download it electronically, it's probably an audiobook on it. That is just a helpful book. And what it's going to say to you is basically here's what the Bible says about God's



sovereignty. Here's what the Bible says about our responsibility to respond to the gospel. Those are laid side by side. And he helps us think through how those harmonize in Scripture, even though we may get a Charley horse thinking them through. And it's a very well-done little book and it's helpful. Two more. I might recommend if you really want to go deep in all the biblical data, Dawn Carson, D.A. Carson wrote a book called "Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility." It's a little bit more dense, a little more difficult, but he gets all the biblical data, he even goes through inter-testamental times and thinks through what the rabbis were teaching. And he says, OK, here's the data, the biblical data and even how it was early understood. If you've got a better way to explain this than what the Bible does in laying these side-by-side, well, then go for that. I might give you a third book. Schreiner, Tom Schreiner, who was just here teaching for us, was the editor of a book called "Still Sovereign." That's in our book store as well. "Still Sovereign." And that would be a helpful book and it's written by a bunch of different people, a bunch of different authors per chapter and will help you think through all the little sub-questions you'll have about that. And then as long as I'm quoting books, here's one and this one is helpful. Doug Wilson wrote a little book called "Easy Chair, Hard Words," "Easy Chair, Hard Words." It's a little book and he puts it in a fictitious dialog between a Christian and a seasoned pastor. And if you just get into that, he's a clever writer and he does a good job helping you think through all that. And as long as we're talking about books, maybe another one. There's a guy up, I think he's still in Santa Ana, maybe he took another church, a friend of ours, David Clotfelter. David Clotfelter wrote a little book called "Sinners in the Hands of a Good God." "Sinners in the Hands of a Good God." Again, all these are about human responsibility and divine sovereignty. If you want to give it 10 minutes of thought and come up with an analogy like God looked at the tape, just saw what I would do, and so he's just kind of basically waiting to see what I would do in eternity past, then you'll go through your Christian life with a very simplistic view of this. Or you can dig a little deeper and come to the view that's going to say that's a hard question. Christians have struggled with it for a long time, but God's will prevails. My will is legitimate enough to be held responsible. Humans are responsible. God is still sovereign. Great question and a lot of reading for you to do now, apparently.

Question: Hi Pastor Mike. OK, so you mentioned before that when Jesus got baptized, he wasn't doing it just as an example. It was more than that. Would you mind touching on that a little bit?

Pastor Mike: Yes. In John it says when John the Baptist said what you and I would say if he came to be baptized to you, you'd say, "Wait a minute, I should be being baptized by you. I shouldn't be baptizing you." Because this was a baptism of repentance. And he knew this, that Jesus is the spotless "Lamb of God who comes to take away the sin of the world!" That's what he said. So when Jesus responds to his apprehension, Jesus says, "Permit it now so that I might fulfill all righteousness." And part of Jesus' life wasn't to come and die. If so, he could have been beamed down on Thursday and die on Friday. But instead he had to live this life out, doing all the things that God would expect people to do. So all those acts of righteousness could be imputed or credited or accounted to us. Right? The thief on the cross did not get baptized by John the Baptist. How is God going to say, "Hey, you did all the stuff you're supposed to do? Because Jesus got baptized by John the Baptist." So Jesus fulfilled



all the righteousness. It wasn't just, "Hey, guys, here's how you get baptized. Watch how my head goes down. Follow my example." You're right. It's way more than an example. It's about him actively fulfilling the righteous requirements of the law. Which is what it says in Romans. Right? "Christ came in the likeness of sinful men that he might fulfill all the requirements of the law." And the requirements of the law are if the prophet tells you to do something and the prophet in this new covenant time that was transitioning to Christ was John the Baptist, and John the Baptist says you need to be baptized. And so Jesus lined up to get baptized. Why? He didn't need to be baptized because he's not repenting of anything. No, but he's doing it for people who need to get baptized. And there are a lot of people in this room who probably got baptized with the wrong motive or you had mixed motives. He had the perfect motive to be obedient to the Father and therefore that baptism and that righteousness is applied to you. It's one of the reasons I can be right before God, not only because my sin is paid for on the cross, but Christ's active righteousness is now attributed and credited to me. Great question.

Question: I was doing a study in First Corinthians 11, and it deals with the first part about the covering and uncovering of a head in public worship. Then Paul goes into the creation order, which I understand. But when you get to verse 10, it says, "That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels." So that's sort of threw me a little loop there.

Question: Well angels are astute observers. Matter of fact, that's what they were called in the late Old Testament period, they were called "the watchers" of all that's going on here. And they, as Jesus said, "Behold the face of God." Luke 15, they watched the repentance in the heart of... So they're very interested in what goes on in this auditorium tonight. I mean, they are the agents of God, they report to God. That's how the Bible describes them. So there is something going on in Corinth that relates to their "head" that related to their "head." And you've got to carefully read First Corinthians 11 because the word "head" is used as a metaphorical "who's my leader?" And the thing on the top of my neck. Both of them were described. One of them had to do with their head, what was on their head, their hair, and whether it honored or dishonored their head, their leader. Right? And in the passage, God is very interested in seeing the order of authority within the church, within heaven. Father is the head of the Son. The Son is the head of the Church. The husband is the head of the wife. All of these things are "heads" that describes the leadership and authority. The distinction in seeing the difference between men and women was displayed even as it is now through the feminine expression of how people presented themselves and how they wore their hair, which I would argue in the passage. And it may even been said in ancient Near East, the covering itself, even though I do think as the New International Version tries to translate that passage, may be accurate. You could see a woman walking into our church tonight and have a haircut that's not just a cute body, female short haircut, but one that's making a statement. Women's lib, if you want to put it that way, was strong in first-century Corinth. This was a metropolitan, very forward-thinking, progressive society. Something was going on with the way those women came in, were basically casting off the authority of men saying, you know, "I am woman, hear me roar and now I'm going to come into Christianity and I'm going to be that way. Women are better than men. We can do anything they can. We're better." You know, you got all that in our culture today. How they express that through their customs. Two words



use there. They're both at the beginning, verse 1, and I think at the end of the 11 where the word is used, or maybe it's verse 12, where you have the custom, which is a word in Greek that describes how this is lived out. And so in the custom of the day, there was something about the arrangement of the hair or the head covering that expressed the fact that we know we're not men and we understand the headship within the church and the leadership within the home, and therefore, there's an expression of that. It's something the angels would be offended by if you basically said, "I don't care what the creation order is, I don't care about any of that." So that's an interesting statement. Much like Hebrews 13, when it talks about angels, you know, you might entertain them unawares, I think is how the English Standard Version puts it. But, yeah, angels have a lot more interface with reality than we think. Maybe because of dimensionalism, we could get into that. But they're here, they're present, but they are not material and they are concerned about whether or not we're honoring the God that they revere and watch the seraphim flying around crying out "holy, holy, holy." So if you are bucking anything within the biblical system and expressing that through a custom that says, I don't care about that, you offend angels and that's what's going on there. So read that passage carefully and distinguish between the leadership. There are the eternal principles of order within the home, within the church, and expressions of that in the customs or the traditions. Two different Greek words, same meaning in terms of the expression of how you show that. Like wearing pants, for instance, at a time was a rebellious act. Well, you know, angels aren't stuck in ancient culture, but they know what is a reflection of rebellion against an order. Right? And in the Old Testament, for instance, a man could not put on woman's clothing and a woman could not put on man's clothing. That was a disordering of God's order. And when it was done in an act of rebellion and not by accident, I don't know how that would happen, but God said it's wrong, it's an abomination. And of course, if he thinks it's an abomination, the angels are going to be offended. So that's what's going on in that passage.

Question: Why are you a pastor?

Pastor Mike: That's a good question. Because I couldn't make it doing anything else, so it's the only job I could get. Yeah. No. Why am I a pastor? I didn't want to be a pastor, I grew up in a church and thought it was good, but I didn't want to work there, although I did work there on facilities for several years. I don't know how long. My dad would know. My mom would know. But that was just a paycheck so I could spend it on me. But my dad sent me off to Bible school because he required that we do one year of Bible school before we go to the university because he was concerned that all the bad teaching at the university would mess up our commitment to Christ. Well, I didn't really have a commitment to Christ. I had an external conformity to going to church and being a good kid. So when I went off to Bible school and I didn't want to go there, I became a Christian and it's a good place to be at a Bible school and you become a new Christian because everything you're doing throughout the day was reading the Bible, studying the Bible, studying doctrine, studying theology. And I loved it as a new Christian, I soaked it in. At the school I went to you had to do things like teach Sunday school, lead a worship service at a nursing home, go door to door and do evangelism. And so I did all these things, learning all this really hungry for Christianity. And I heard a sermon one Sunday by my pastor in downtown Chicago, and he got up and he preached a sermon. I don't even know what it was on. But he said, you know what Christianity needs? The Church



needs? He said we don't need Christians who dabble in a lot of things. We need Christians to do one thing and do it well. In other words, just talking about the health of the church. It would be good for the church to have people that do one thing and do it well, whatever that one thing is. And I remember that sermon just resonated in my mind. I'm thinking, what's my one thing? And I didn't know what I was doing in my life at that point because I was a new Christian and all my dreams of being what I wanted to be, I thought, I don't even know if I should do that. But I started praying and I started giving myself to say, "God, what's the one thing you want me to do?" And as I went to teach Sunday school classes and I started leading youth groups and I just was like, this seems like the one thing that if I worked at it, I could do this and do it well. So I'm going to try to do this well. And if you asked me at that point even, "Are you going to be a pastor Mike? I don't want to be a pastor, but I need to find Christians that I can teach the Bible to which someone should have knocked on my forehead at that point and said, well, that's what pastors do, basically. But I still wasn't thinking that way. But I kept getting opportunities to do that. And the more I had opportunities to teach the Bible, the more I was asked to work with churches. And then it was like, would you be on staff here? I said, OK. And then I came on staff at a church and I thought, I can work with college students and I can work with young people and it'll be great. And then a month into my time there, the pastor was diagnosed with terminal cancer and went into radiation, chemotherapy and was basically out of it. And so I would go to his bedside and he'd say, OK, well, you're preaching this Sunday and you're going to run this board meeting and you're going to set up this program. And so I was in my mid-20s, still probably not thinking I'd ever be a pastor, but now all of a sudden I was kind of thrown into it. He died. They asked me to be the pastor. I became a pastor, but I never really wanted to. So, and I'm still doing it. That's my answer. Well, that was a good one to end on because it was easy because I knew all the answers to that question. So why don't you stand with me and I'll dismiss you with a word of prayer. I know this is a weird service to come to but every year we try and do this. If you have a burning question you can ask it anytime but not in a service until next year. Alright, let's pray. God, thanks for our team here, our church. We love the people, their thirst for your truth, your word. We want to be governed by it. We have so much, obviously, God, always to learn, to plumb the depths of the riches of your truth. Even like the question we had about sovereignty and free will. It is so amazing to go deeper into these topics as Paul finishes that passage, God, he left us with that great verse that all things are from him and through him and to him. The depth and the riches and the amazing breadth of God's truth, it's a good thing for us to give ourselves to. So I pray if nothing else God for this weekend would be for this group a catalyst to study your word more, to learn it better, to be able talk about it more often, and to send us back to just reading our Bibles. So God, thank you so much for how you work in our lives and give us exposure to truth like you did tonight in just talking about a variety of topics. So, dismiss us now with a sense of a blessing upon our lives as we confess our sins and follow you and do what you've asked us to do.

Pastor Mike: In Jesus name. Amen.