



Q&A 2023 – Part 1

Pastor Mike Fabarez

Pastor Mike Well, we set aside once a year a weekend for a completely unscripted set of three services where we give you the opportunity to ask whatever question you might have about the Bible, about the Christian life, about God, about how to apply the Bible, whatever it might be. And we've got guys roaming around here with microphones, and all we ask is that you grab a microphone. We'd love to have you stand up and ask your question about the Bible or the Christian life, and we'll see and pray and hope it's edifying and encouraging and insightful. Let's pray for that. All right. We're going to start right here in the front, I guess. Alex?

Question So one of the questions I have is when it comes down to like not trying to be annoying, but like wanting to help a brother understand that when they're in sin. Like when is the time that we should stop telling them, like, cause the Bible talks like, you know, more than once, more than twice with like a witness? And if they keep on doing it, stop. But even though they say they're saved, but when they're acting in very, very, very unbiblical views, when should we like basically say, okay, it's in the Lord's hands, we should give up? Like, what's the time that we should basically say we leave it up to you?

Pastor Mike Okay. Well, I'll take your question at face value that it's very, very, very unbiblical, whatever it is that they're doing. And I would say it doesn't take long to make it very clear whether it's two or three times where you've had the conversation, where we're clearly not on the same page here. And if it's someone in the church that you go to, you need to go up the chain, as we see in Scripture, Matthew 18, to go and take someone else with you. The whole point of it, let's just get to the point of it is to try and rectify the problem. We want to see people who are in sin, who are going down a path where they're going to reap what they sow, for out of love for them and honor of Christ we want to fix the problem. And so just keep the goal in mind. And that's when we, if they're in the church, we keep them in a place where we get someone else involved in this, and then we go all the way up to someone who is on staff, a pastor. And it may be that we need to exclude them from the fellowship if it's very, very unbiblical as you say. If it's not someone in the church, well, then the Bible's pretty clear about people in First Corinthians who are not doing what is right. They're violating God's truth. We don't even have a meal with such a person because it's clear that you are claiming Christ but you are not following Christ. And we're not just talking about, you know, you've missed a couple of days on your Daily Bible Reading. We're talking about something that's a clear violation of God's truth. I hope that helps. Got a microphone right here or wherever the microphone is, just wave at me. Here it is.

Question A Pastor Mike had a question regarding A.I. and machine learning as it pertains to our world today and whether or not you believe that as a society we're playing with fire. And the second part to that was I heard a story regarding "A.I. church" where machine learning would create sermons and, you know, people would listen to it. And obviously that horrified me. But I wanted to know if you had any thoughts on that. And also if maybe A.I. does have a role in ministry somewhere.

Pastor Mike Yeah. Let me start with the middle question. In terms of how technology can ruin something biblical like, yeah, trying to turn church over or sermons over to A.I. would be a good example of that. Here's a book title for you if you've not read this one. Tech-Wise Family. Tech-Wise Family. It's really going to be a challenging read because it's very convicting. But we could all use the advantage of flourishing as human beings by distancing from technology in many ways in our lives. With that said, it's a tool. It's a tool that can be utilized for good. Let me go next to your third question. I do think there's a role for it. For instance, the Partners manual that I wrote, the discipleship manual, I had a gal call me from some state. I had spoken at their church before. She wanted to get our Partners Program in a language we hadn't yet translated it into. She pumped parts of it into whatever the dialect was in Asia and it came back. She had two people who were native speakers who read the whole thing and said they had like no corrections, like two minor, like small corrections. If you can do that with A.I., I mean, that's amazing. It takes so long for us to translate things into other languages, and artificial intelligence can certainly aid us in that regard. A lot of pastors struggle to have their sermons, if it's worth repeating, to have them put into some kind of prose, some kind of written manuscript that makes sense. A.I. can be the bridge between a transcribed sermon, which I think we need to do a bunch of ours, if not all of ours, for whatever reasons. But to have that turned into something that is read for edification, that reads like it was written, I mean, there are certainly roles for it. You can see how a tool can be useful for biblical and godly ends. Now to your first question, do I think we're playing with fire? Yes, of course. All you have to do is dig down a few layers which we've seen with what A.I. can do, and, you know, a lot of smart people are saying, you know, this is something that can end up being, you know, catastrophic for us. Now, catastrophic, I'm not talking an H.G. Wells kind of, I mean, although there are scenarios clearly that you can logically forecast that A.I. can become a real problem. But to have a view of the science fiction, the reason I'm trying to distance from some views that you might have of, you know, Transformers or whatever, where you have... I've only seen part of one and that barely paying attention with one eye while eating pizza. But the point is that we are made in the image of God, which of course is a decreasing view. It used to be the dominant view that everyone understood themselves as more than material. They weren't naturalists. But we have people now who think somehow as naturalists, we can do something with artificial intelligence that can actually bring these things to life in a way that reasons like human beings and therefore it becomes, it takes on characteristics or attributes of humanity, which of course it doesn't. We believe there's something unique about who we are. We're not just software that somehow encodes intelligence on the synapses of our brain and, you know, we can do that some way with artificial intelligence. All I'm telling you is that we are going to be unique, although a powerful tool in artificial intelligence to create real problems for humanity, I think, yeah. So to answer the first question, yes, I do think we're playing with fire if it's just an unbridled let's just release all of this. And that's why I think a lot of smart people have said we need to slow down on all this. But the middle question, we as a church and as families and as individuals, I think we need to think about the role of technology. Streaming, right? Streaming can be useful and people can be traveling and connect with their home church on a weekend and keep track of a series through Acts. But you know, if it becomes church for people, wrong. It shouldn't do that, right? So technology becomes a barrier and A.I. can also become a barrier, right? I

mean, pastors who should be sitting and studying and doing the hard work of preparing sermons can rely on A.I. to do a lot of the work for them and it's never going to be the kind of sermon that it ought to be. So, you know, we need to not... and this is why Tech-Wise Family came to mind, that book that shows how we soften our capacities by leaning on technology. And even our kids suffer immensely by just being handed a screen and, you know, being slack-jaw for an hour. And that's what we do just because we're busy. So that book will challenge you for sure. And so, yes, yes. And what was your third question? What if? Yes and yes. Yes, yes, yes. All right.

Question So growing up, my Presbyterian grandmother would talk about the relatives in the churchyard and would describe when she would talk about the book of Revelation, she would describe them as all being in the grave, still waiting like Grandma and Grandpa are together, still there. And then so in the Bible on the crucifixion day, Christ is talking to the criminals on the cross and says, "You'll be with me in paradise that night." So I guess, you know, it's a perfectly simplified question. Are we in the ground or are we already in heaven with him after we go?

Pastor Mike Who you are and you say we, are we, or am I in the ground? Here's the difficulty of that question, even though the answer is I'm not in the ground. And that's the short answer. The more difficult answer is the fact that we as human beings designed to be enmeshed in a body are not fully who were supposed to be without our body. And certainly everything from the beginning of Genesis all the way through Revelation death is defined as the spirit leaving the body. I mean, that's how it's described. When Rachel's dying it said her spirit left her, she died. That's death. When Jesus turned his spirit over to his Father, he died. This is how death is defined. That is a definition of death biblically. So you end up in Second Corinthians Chapter 5 as Paul says, he's naked, right? You're without your earthly tent, you're naked. But you're longing to be clothed with your eternal dwelling. So you will not quite be who you are designed to be until you get back in a body. The reason we have problems with this, and some people believe in soul sleep, that the soul is embedded in the body and the body is in the ground and that person is not there, they're looking at passages like Daniel 12, which speaks about "many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will arise." Well, that's true. And you can talk about "the many" meaning like they are in the ground. Their bodies are in the ground. We talk about death. We talk about euphemistic terms like sleep. Right? And I get that. But when the Bible gets to, and this is progressive revelation, gets to such clarity in the New Testament that not only is the spirit leaving the body the definition of death, but the conscious awareness of life after I'm detached from my body is immediate, right? That's what Jesus told parables about the rich man and Lazarus. They were conscious and aware and interacting after the departure of their body. But they're not complete in their resurrected state the way God designed it in Genesis. And that is making someone from the dust of the ground, breathing into him the breath of life and they become a living being. It's not that we're not living, but we're not "living living," right? We're not living the way that we want to be living. And I should say that. I did that because, I mean, we are alive of course we're conscious, we're sentient, we're all of that. But we're not embedded in a body the way we were designed to have the experiences that we're going to eventually have. So we wait for the resurrection, for the completion of God's redemptive plan. And the redemptive plan awaits the redemption of

the body. And yet you will be conscious the minute you leave your body to be conscious and aware. But much like you do, you go places in your dreams, and this is not a great analogy, it breaks down, but, you know, you don't take your body with you and you're not really going anywhere, but your mind is idling and you have that sense of stuff and reality. But the reality is that the tactile material reality is you won't have that experience again until the resurrection. Now, some people have different views. If you read Randy Alcorn's book on Heaven, if some of you have read that, you know, he makes a case for a temporary body. It's some kind of temporary body. And he uses the language of the book of Revelation and saying, you know, they're in robes and they're clothed with the descriptions. I would say that's phenomenological language. It's giving us a sense of understanding things in the heavenly realm. But we're not supposed to think, okay, well, I guess they're talked about as though they have bodies, so they must have real tangible bodies when the rest of the Scripture is very clear, we don't get our body back until the resurrection. So no, some people speak that way and they don't mean it. And depending on what Presbyterian they are, I would think they don't mean that. Presbyterian theology does not teach that. But there are groups that teach that. A lot of groups teach soul sleep, and that means that you are not going to be conscious or aware until your body rises. And that's something I argue against in my book *Ten Mistakes People Make About Heaven, Hell, and the Afterlife*. I have a section in there about soul sleep and a chapter on death early on. Chapter three, I think. But anyway. Great question.

Question So in our home fellowship group, we had a discussion regarding the millennial kingdom, and I was mentioning that there will be the Feast of Booths being celebrated. Then someone came to me and said, "Well, why do they practice the sacrifices if Christ is already there?" And I said, "Well, for memorial reasons?" I don't think I was given such a good reception to that answer.

Pastor Mike Yeah, they don't like that because in part, this is one of the things that they throw out there to say, well, there is no physical millennial kingdom because if you take the promises of Ezekiel seriously, well then there have to be sacrifices in the millennium. And so we don't believe that. So a-millennialists make that case, and they make it based on the fact that it would seem regressive to go back to sacrifices. Well, I'm stuck in my mind, I'm a convinced pre-millennialist. And I think that there is a physical millennial kingdom and I think Ezekiel describes it, and I think there will be a temple, and I think there will be sacrifices. You could say like the communion meal, and that's kind of the oversimplified answer that you gave and it's not wrong entirely. There is a sense in which the death of a lamb on a sacrificial altar is a reminder from our perspective in the millennial kingdom back to the crucifixion of Christ. Just like the bread and the cup does the same for us now. But there's more to it if you read those chapters carefully. There's more to it in terms of an actual fixing of the laws of uncleanness that the Levites are supposed to follow. And in that regard, I guess to get more technical on the answer, you have to say yes, there is a ceremonial cleanness that is established by the act, which is not metaphysical in my theology, but it's practical. God asks you to do this and you're not right with the community until you do this under the Levitical legislation. And I say that because if I don't say that and the reason I'm a pre-millennialist and the reason I think that we have to deal with this issue of the kingdom sacrifices is because if I don't the easy answer would go, "I don't want any of that. Let's just say it doesn't happen."

Okay. I got so many promises in the Old Testament that I just cannot square with anything in the present reality. And if you're an a-mill guy here and you believe that, I know there are answers that you present, but I'm unconvinced. I've tried to sit through, and I have, 900-level hermeneutics classes by a-millennialists, and I'm just not convinced that somehow I can take these promises in Zachariah and Ezekiel and Isaiah and say, yeah, and Jeremiah, these are all fulfilled now. I don't think they are. I think you're treating the text in a way that divorces the power of the words of the text to have a real fulfillment. And they will say, "Well, we don't take everything literally." I understand that. That's why we like to say we believe in an historical grammatical, normal interpretation. They'll say we believe in a literal. I do believe in literal interpretation whenever the genre lends to a literal interpretation. And I do think there's no way around there's a literal description of sacrifices in the millennial kingdom, and there are priests and David, the prince, is sitting there ruling in Jerusalem as a prince under the King, who's Jesus at that point physically with toenails and fingernails. So all of that, I have to say, yeah, well, there has to fit somewhere in this. How does it fit? Well, just like you would say nothing metaphysical is happening. When Jesus told the guy he healed with leprosy, go show yourself to the priest, take the sacrifices you're supposed to take. Now, he said that because we were still under the Old Testament law at that time, Jesus was still enforcing ceremony Levitical law. And if you think about that, you think, okay, well what happened? Is that when he got right with God? No, that's when he got right with the community. And I'm thinking the same thing is happening in the Levitical structure of the Ezekiel temple. And it's so specific, right? If that's not a literal temple, all that's described there, I'm just now I'm lost and I'm going to struggle interpreting a lot of Scripture. There are dimensions, there are cubits, and it's this much and this high and this feature. It's just too specific for me to go, yeah. And if you're a-mill, great. We're brothers in Christ. I get all that. But I'm not. And I'm a convinced pre-millennialist and I believe there will be sacrifices in the kingdom. And I think it will connect people with the community even though there's not a metaphysical thing that happens because they do the sacrifices. Yeah, but it will be a memorial. And I do think your answer was right. It's just the surface of it. And there's a deeper level to it because if you read every verse of it you start to get stuck with, "Oh, wow, that means something." There's cleanness that is established when you do these things.

Question Do you think it's okay for Christians to do yoga?

Pastor Mike Yeah. Now, here's the problem with that question. Not that you're a problem for asking it. You just created a problem for me. (audience laughing) There's no doubt that the roots of yoga, you could say that's not the worldview I affirm. That's not the worldview that I'm a part of. I do not want to connect with the meanings that were initially established for all of this that's going on here. And you can say, "I don't want anything to do with that. But I want to do yoga." Like a lot of things when the connections are strong which, like Paul would say, idols are nothing. There is no god but God. And yet there are many gods and many lords. But for us there's only one God and one Lord, Jesus Christ. There's a give and take in that passage with the meat sacrifices to idols in that there is no god. There's nothing in this. You can put your body in any shape you want if you're willing to put up with the pains you'll have the next day and you can call them whatever you want. They can be in Sanskrit if you want. And really it's nothing. But the connection is legitimate. There's a lineage of the history and



the meaning of those things. Now, here's the problem I always have. Clearly, I haven't been in a yoga class and I always say to someone, it would really depend in my mind like what's going on in the class. Because if we do start to put the over layers of the kind of meditation and definitions of meditation that they've got there, then I'm going to say, yeah, I wouldn't let my daughter or whatever, my family... No you can't do that. And then people said, Well, I just check out in the corner or I just think biblically or I just do the right thing. Could you do that? That's possible. But at some point you're involved in something I'm thinking just take a Zumba class or whatever they have that's still around. Do something else. So it's not a simple answer for me. And oftentimes when you get into the morass of people involved in something that's got connections that I would say theologically I can't even affirm. Right? But then you say, well, does that mean I can't even participate in any way in it? I'm going to say, well, that gets fuzzy and muddy for me. And oftentimes, when something is fuzzy and muddy for me, that's when I just take the whole thing, at least for myself, and say, I'm just not interested in it. Let's just be done with that and let's just figure out something else. So for me, practically, I would say in my immediate circle, I'm a pastor obviously to the church, but I'm not willing to say you should not do yoga, that's a sin. I'm not going to say that. But I am going to say I would question based on what's going on in there, if there is anything that would take you back to the meanings and definitions and the practices that obviously are incompatible with Christianity. If you want the hardcore view you can read people online who are going to talk about, you know, there's no possible way a Christian should ever do this. I'm not going to go that far, but I am going to say... But then again, that's from ignorance, because I don't know what's being said in there. And they won't let me just get in the room and watch. So I don't know. And all I can do is say, I know historically the underpinnings, the philosophy behind it, the spiritualism behind it. Yeah, I wouldn't be interested in that. You know, but you could look at taekwondo and karate and a lot of other martial arts and you could start making some of the same arguments. Well, it depends on what we're doing there. My kid is being told to do things that are incompatible with Christianity. If he's having to opt out of it at some point that becomes too compelling, it compounds into a place where this is too hard. Let's just do something else. Let's play baseball. So and I guess that's why it's a muddy thing. That's an unsatisfying answer. But at least you know where I'm at on that. Okay?

Question Hello. Sorry, I have a bit of anxiety, so if I... Yeah, I just wanted to say, first off, I'm very grateful to God for Compass Bible Church, for you and everyone who serves and the ministries and Partners as well as 25 years of Focal Point. I just started listening a week ago so I have a lot to catch up on. My question is I have an upcoming meeting with one of my friends who wants to know about prophecies in the Old Testament about Jesus, and he's looking also for evidence of Old Testament or New Testament prophecies that we can point to that are like confirmed, like we can be like, okay, this is like proof that this happened or whatever. I brought up the Mt. Ararat in Turkey, but he gave me some articles that went into the science about Noah's Ark, and they basically were using like science to try and prove Noah's Ark wrong. We know everything is possible with God. So I guess my other question would be how would you like combat that part? Because they were going into like geographical or like diseases or something.



Pastor Mike Okay. Yeah, I definitely wouldn't start with the Shroud of Turin or, you know, Noah's Ark on Mt. Ararat because there's just too much inconclusive discussion about all those things. Prophecy, right? The great thing about the Old Testament is it started to be written in 1440 B.C. and ended in 430 B.C., so you've got, you know, a thousand years from the time God used Moses to start writing the Old Testament through Malachi. And we see some of the early promises coming true in history. Now, again, someone can claim, like your skeptical friend can say, "Well, that was probably all just written later and that's why things that were written in 1440 B.C., they were fulfilled in 1000 B.C. or 600 B.C. or 400 B.C. But he'd be wrong. And I think you could probably establish objectively, if you were willing to look at the evidence and say, okay, clearly these things were not written after the fulfillment. And you can look at what, and I'm just now thinking, just within the 1445 to 430 B.C., so the Old Testament from Genesis to Malachi. But I immediately think of like when Moses starts talking about one day Israel is going to come out, this nomadic group of people who left Egypt and they're going to have a king and they're going to disobey and they're going to lose the rights to the land that they're about to go into and they're going to go into captivity, but they're going to pray to God and God is going to bring them back into that land. Well, if you know Old Testament, of course you know in 586 B.C., that's exactly what happened. Nebuchadnezzar comes in, they get taken away for 70 years of discipline, mathematically based on how many Sabbath years they gave up and didn't keep. And then God brings... I mean, there's a good solid beginning of like specific things that are going on in the prophecies of Moses that come true in the playing out of the thousand years of written biblical history of the Old Testament. Now, that's the 39 books of the Old Testament. You've got the whole genre that you asked about, messianic prophecies. What about the things they say, starting with Moses, about there's going to come a prophet like me that's in the future that God is going to bring, and he's going to be the ultimate one? You better listen to him. And that's kind of nebulous and broad, but it's clear that there was always this pinnacle of Old Testament promises that there'd be one person who would fulfill every role, starting with Moses, prophet all the way through to the priests and the kings. And that person would be called the Messiah, the Mashiach. That's the Hebrew word for oil poured over your head, the anointed one. And that means that he's set apart as someone unique from the rest of the Israelites. The prophet, priest and king, in this case, the ultimate messiah. There's a great book that I would recommend this one because it's recently out and it deals with all the objections that people have, and that's done by Michael Rydelnik, Moody Publishing. It's called Messianic Prophecies. Great book, fat book, a lot of contributors, super helpful. If you want something short and to the point and though sometimes overstated, you can go to Sean and Josh McDowell's book, *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. It's got a whole section in there on messianic prophecies. If you want a long extended multi-volume set, Michael Brown. So that's like the multi-volume set, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*. So that's a multi-volume set. Michael Rydelnik's book. One volume, big. And *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. One section, one chapter, maybe two chapters in the *New Evidence That Demands A Verdict*. All of those will look at messianic prophecies. Now, messianic prophecies there are a few kinds. There's a kind of messianic prophecy that there's no way you could be the messiah if you didn't hit this checkbox, like "born in Bethlehem." Micah 5:2. He's going to be born in this village of Bethlehem in the city of David. There are others that are like, you could read Psalm 22 and say, well, there are a lot of allusions and Jesus even quotes things that happen. But if that didn't happen we wouldn't



even know because it's not clearly about the one fulfillment person, the prophet, priest and king. So the problem with McDowell's book sometimes is it's just we kind of crisscross those and some skeptics going to go, well, how is that a messianic prophecy? Part of it is the messianic connections are often made once the Messiah shows up and looks back. But there are plenty that look forward, like when he's going to arrive. Daniel Chapter 9. Where he's going to be born? Micah Chapter 5. You know, what he would accomplish, right? Moses clearly describing some of that. Isaiah 53 describing his death, his resurrection. So stick with clear fulfillments of prophecy that have taken place in history and time. And Messiah is like the best and greatest because there are just so many. So I hope that helps. And I hope that conversation goes well.

Question I have a question on the new perspective of Paul. N.T. Wright. And I haven't read that, but I keep coming across other books that reference that. So I was wondering if you could just give me a brief synopsis of what it means that new perspective on Paul. It seems to me after 2,000 years there's not a whole lot that's new. But at any rate, I'd like to know about that and whether or not it's, you know, is it worthwhile reading it or is it just somebody trying to sell books?

Pastor Mike Yeah. No N.T. Wright is not trying to sell books. Norm Wright is trying to present theology, Pauline theology. It's not worth reading. And I would say as your pastor, don't read it. You should, if you want to go deep dive, you can talk to our teachers or professors at Compass Bible Institute, Dr. Goodrich, Dr. Kelly will talk to you about the new perspective on Paul. I'll give you a summary. Okay. N.T. Wright and others, there was a movement of three or four very influential authors who wanted to move away from what they saw as a legal forensic interpretation of justification that they thought was birthed in the Reformation. And, you know, 500 years ago that we started to think of this thing so black and white, so legally and all the language you hear here all the time, imputation of Christ's righteousness to us, that I'm made right because of that personal faith in Christ. They don't like the courtroom analogies. And to dismiss that, to move that away into something more communal, which I'll get to that in a minute why. They got to deal with Paul. Because nothing's more forensic and legal than the book of Romans, the first, you know, eight chapters. So they spend a lot of time looking at Paul and what Paul is writing and trying to show how really this is about the badges, the expression of the customs of Judaism, including the Gentiles. But this is really not about this repentance and faith in Christ and my sin being taken and put on the cross and Christ's righteousness being imputed to me. Salvation starts to get defined more in terms of the community, the community that no longer is telling the Jews to stop with your circumcision and you trying to wear your uniform around. Here's the upshot of it. All you have to do is read Norm Wright on other things. And Norm writes is a brilliant man. There's no doubt that he's smart, but I don't agree with him. And there are two guys who kind of grew up in the same trajectory just to kind of take a little sidebar on this. Dawn Carson, D.A. Carson and N.T. Wright. Norm Wright and Dawn Carson. They're completely opposite when it comes to these things. But they grew up in the same trajectory of scholarship in the age of New Testament studies. Read anything on Carson about the new perspective and you'll be where I think you need to be because he defends that, Piper does the same thing in his book on defending justification. I forget what it's called, justification. Look it up. Piper tries to attack that. That's

more of a popularized book on it. Carson goes deeper with a conglomeration of a couple of volumes on trying to deal with how Paul's perspective as we understand it in Reformation and Augustinian language is correct. But the point is this: if you read N.T. Wright on pastoral issues, which of course I have a great interest in that. I'm not a New Testament research scholar, I'm a pastor. So I read his stuff on other things, and I think I can see why this all fits together for me. There's a squishier theology I think at the core that he rigorously scholastically tries to uphold. But there's a squishier theology in his pastoral theology, right? A lot of it gets down to, you know, why aren't we helping more people? Why are we always looking at heaven? Why are you always trying to get people's souls saved? Why don't we just feed them? Why don't we clothe them? Now it's not just feed them and clothe them. But you read the tenor of his writings, which is broad, because he's a brilliant man, he's prolific, he writes a ton, but he's always soft on the issues and moves us away from the concern the evangelical traditional missionary endeavor to save souls by having people trust in Christ and get their sins taken care of it at the cross. It softens all of that. The new perspective of Paul lightens all that up. Right? Dr. Goodrich would be happy to talk to you endlessly about the details of it all. But that is a five-minute, Q&A summary of the problem. It is a problem to me. No, you shouldn't read it. I would, you know, unless you're writing a paper or something.

Question My question is about cremation. Should Christians be cremated?

Pastor Mike Yeah. "Should" is a strong word. I would say I don't want you to be cremated. Right? And it gets back to our first question, it's not you. That's where when you get such a dichotomized view, "that's just my body. It doesn't matter, right? I'm gone. I'm going to get a new one." But let's just remember, the new one is always corresponding to the old one. Right? Christ was raised from the dead. The old body that was put in the grave that was putrefying after, you know, from Friday to Sunday, wasn't there anymore. God took what was left and transformed it. As Paul says in Philippians, we're going to have our lowly bodies transformed by his power to be like his glorious body. So my body that goes in the grave, and I bought a plot at El Toro. If Carlynn dies first she's on the bottom. We're saving a little bit of money here. I'm sure she'll be on the top. But here's how this all works. I want my body set aside respectfully in Lake Forest or wherever that is, until the resurrection. Because that's the pattern of the Bible, because there's a one-to-one correspondence between the body that goes in the grave and the body that comes out of the grave. Before I depart from the pattern of Scripture, I should have a good reason. Note the rise of cremation in Western culture in Europe came with the disdain for Christianity. All this talk of what N.T. Writes often, afterlife, getting right with God, hell, heaven, all that. They didn't like that. And it's a generalization, but there are plenty of books on this. And we saw a rise in people wanting to be cremated. Now, today, a lot of people don't think about it. It's like, "Oh, it's cheaper than burial. Let's just do that. It's kind of creepy to think about my body in the El Toro Cemetery. So, you know, I don't want to do it. Just cremate me." The body is a sacred receptacle of your spirit. It stands here right now looking at me. I'm looking into your eyes, your spirit is animating your body. That body should be treated with respect when you die, right? Your family should not say it doesn't matter what happens to her. And so just take your body and send it to Riverside with some rave and they take and desecrate your body however they want. Or no one's going to just roll it in the trash can to the curb because it was your body. You animated that body. That body



was part of your humanity. So we want to set it aside respectfully and wait for the resurrection. That's called burial. Put it in a crypt, put it in a tomb, put it in the ground, put it somewhere respectfully. The pattern is trying to preserve it. When they came out of Egypt, they wanted to make sure that the body of the patriarchs came back to Canaan. The bodies were important. Burning was seen as a sign of God's judgment. When Jezebel died and the dogs ate her up and all that was left were her hands and her feet, they said, "Look at that. We can't even bury her. This is an act of God's judgment." So I'm just saying the only time you'll see the community of those followers of God in the Old Testament burning a body was the burning of Saul's body after it had been decaying on stakes at Beth-shan, at the walls Beth-shan. And they took it and burned it. That's the only time you see it and it's not because, hey, we're into cremation now. It's the exception because of the torrid state that that corpse must have been in at that point. But then again, they took the bones and they risked their lives to bring it back to Jerusalem. So, yes, I would want you to be buried. I've done Q&A for years now and I've had people leave the church over my answer. Please don't leave the church because you just had your mom cremated or something. But would you at least respect even if you have what's left? And I would say to even intern those ashes if that's what you've done. Right? Buy a little wall crypt at the cemetery and have a place where there is this sense of setting aside what's left for the resurrection. That'd be my recommendation. You go, "Ching, ching, ching. He must have all kinds of money." Here's the deal. I just think this is important. People are going taking European vacations and dropping a lot of dough. And I'm just thinking we can spend a little money out of respect for the body. And so, you know, I'm not into spreading ashes in the mountains or, you know, we love to surf here. Let's just do it at San Onofre. I don't think that's what we should be doing. That patterns that rise of people saying, "I don't want my body, I don't want to think about anything after life. I don't. I'm done. My life is over." Just check that out. If we're not talking about Hinduism, which even in Hinduism, we can look at their theology on that and see why I don't want to copy that either. If you want a chapter on this, I wrote a book, Ten Mistakes. The 10th chapter is all about rethinking whether or not we should be cremated or buried. And I do think... funny I brought up Dr. Michael Rydelnik, he read that book, he just happened to tell me, and he changed his view after reading that book. Big Old Testament scholar guy. So that felt good. Because I do think most people haven't thought about it. And I had a conversation with a guy this week about this issue over lunch and he texted me, he said, "I changed my will after our conversation." I'm not in the funeral industry. I'm not making any money on this. But I do think to follow the pattern of Christ and the Scriptures is a wise thing to do. And you better have a really good reason not to. And I know all that you're going to come up to me after and say, "What about? And this happened burning in a car accident." I understand all that. Just like Saul's body had to be treated differently than Abraham's body because he was a victim of war. They cut his head off and they hung his body on a wall. I get it. There are exceptions, but I think the pattern ought to be let's try to bury our loved one's bodies. We set it aside and await the resurrection. "Pastor Mike, are you saying God can't?" I'm not saying that. God can. God can do whatever, but I don't destroy it so that he can prove that he's powerful to recreate. And if money is an issue we can save up for it. We can do what I've tried to do, like plan ahead to where it's cheaper now than later. Or we can pool together our funds and help bury your body. And you understand what I'm... I can't say it's a sin. You understand I'm not saying. So because I can't open the chapter and verse, but I'm saying the biblical logic. I'm

just appealing to you. So I'm not saying you shouldn't. I'm saying I would appeal to you to rethink. Maybe you should. All right.

Question Okay, so I've been struggling with this. Where like in Job 1:6, it says that Satan and the heavenly court came in front of God and presented themselves. And that's when, you know, he was asking about Job and God was talking back to him. But yet, you know, in Exodus 33:20 and Isaiah 6:6, it talks about how God is so holy that, you know, if you're unclean and sinful and whatever that basically you're going to die. So, I don't understand how Satan, who is basically the epitome of evil, you know, can stand in front of and present himself in front of God.

Pastor Mike Okay, let me answer it this way. You're a sinner. Am I right? Okay. And yet the Holy Spirit dwells in you. You're a Christian. You're a sinner. The Holy Spirit dwells in you. He's the HOLY Spirit. How in the world does that work? Right? How can a Holy Spirit be in you? Okay. The whole point of God's omnipresence is that the holy God of the universe has equal perception and powerful presence in every part of the universe. So much so that he upholds all things. Right? The second person of the Godhead is described as deity because he upholds all things by the word of his power. Hebrews Chapter 1 verse 3. Colossians Chapter 1, what is it? Verse 17. "In him all things hold together." He's holding everything together. So every sinful crime that's taking place in the world right now, he's actively present there. How can that be? Well, it seems like sin can be in the presence of God. But the Exodus laws of the Levitical, which goes back to the question about the coming days, these are ceremonies to show that God certainly should not be surrounded by sin. This is what should grieve us, that there's sin in this world that God is in the presence of. We should hate that. We should long for sanctification in our lives. We should long to see the world, as it says in Romans Chapter 8 groaning and can't "wait for the revealing of the sons of God." When the redemption of the body takes place we're not going to sin anymore and the world is going to be redone as it's put in Acts 4 the time of restoration is going to come. Everything is going to be made right and we should long for no sin to be in his presence. But right now it's in his presence. And one of the things that God has apparently, not apparently, clearly indicated in Job 1 has done is allowed the arch enemy of his whole agenda to come and present himself before God. You quoted a passage we cannot get around. So what's the harmony between the Exodus? Well, the Exodus passage is about God deserves holiness. We should want cleanness in his presence. There wasn't one priest who was clean in his presence, only ceremonially clean, right? It wasn't a single... I mean, Zachariah, godly man in Luke Chapter 1, and he goes into the holy place to offer the incense. And an angel shows up, tells them something. He doesn't even believe it. Do you have a doubting heart? You don't believe God? You don't believe God's messenger? You're a sinner. But you did all the sacrifices. Oh, yeah. Those are ceremonial expressions of what God wants and what he deserves. But that's not what he has. Zachariah a sinner who doesn't even believe in what he says is in his presence. Right? And that's a presence that's even just symbolized by the fact that his focalized glory is in this temple in Jerusalem. Well, the whole world is his footstool. Right? He's here and yet he's in a room filled with sinners. And more than that. You're a Christian, so his Spirit now is so intimate with you that he says he's within you, and yet you're a sinner. How can that be? The same way that Satan can come into the presence of God in Job Chapter 1. One day it'll



change, and one day it'll be excluded. And as it's put in Second Thessalonians 1, everyone who is sinful and everything that is sinful or it says the same thing in Revelation 22, everything will be out, away from the presence of God and the glory of his power. But right now, Satan has access as much as God wants to give him access. I don't know if he can interrupt whatever he's doing. He's not a temple being God isn't. But, you know, he allows it, he does it and he's allowing you and me to be filled with the Spirit, even though you're a sinner and I'm a sinner. Yeah, I know it's hard for us to compute, but we're looking at principles of political law and thinking because God's demanding a right of cleanliness that God can't talk to Satan cause he can. You can also listen to your prayers and my prayers. He can even be involved in what's going on in L.A. or whatever is going on in some section of the world where sin is like, you know, exacerbated. Don't think of God as a formula or some kind of equation. Right? Well, this won't compute if this integer is in it. No, God can handle that. And one day he's going to fix it. Genesis 3 through Revelation 19. This is the sinful period where God has to cohabit with sin, but one day it will be done. Starting in Chapter 20, things are going to be made right. Does that help?

Question I would imagine that facing a Q&A question, you would probably want to have some questions and not have others. But my question is one of those that I hope you get. And that is, is there a theology that if most of us understood or more of us understood, would benefit us the most?

Pastor Mike A theology. Yeah. Like an aspect of theology. Yes. That would benefit us the most. One aspect of Christian theology is that God has called us to be humble. Right? God is opposed to the proud but he gives grace to the humble. For God's grace and favor to be strongly upon this church and our congregation we need to be humble people. And that's not the nature of humanity. So I do think we need to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God so that he might exalt us. And if I would say one thing that really connects to so many other things, it's humility. And I know you could look at the hierarchy of virtues and say, love, and I get all that. But if you don't have a humble perspective and get yourself in perspective, not think you're all that, then you're going to criticize people. You're going to do whatever you want. You're going to demand everything conforms to you. You're going to be opposed by God. So I don't know, off the top of my head, I would say if there was one thing I could wave my magic wand and say everyone now has this aspect of their Christian life, figured out, they understand it and they're doing it, I think we want to be a humble people. Which doesn't mean we're quiet about the truth, it doesn't mean we're not evangelistic, it doesn't mean we're not convictional, it doesn't mean we're not absolutely 100% dogged about certain things, but we're not ever doing it for ourselves. Right? We're putting other people's interests before our own. That'd be my answer. Tomorrow might be different, but that's my answer tonight.

Question My wife and I made the decision to put our kids in Christian school. We had public, we had homeschooling, but we went with a Christian school and we're thankful for the general Christian environment there. But there are lots of different kids from different churches there and unchurched kids there. So it's pretty clear that we're among the most conservative theologically and morally there. The first question is, do you have advice for parents in our situation? The second question is, I can think of no organization that could bring glory to God



through education like Compass. Do you ever see a future where Compass gets involved in K-through-12 education?

Pastor Mike Yeah. Let me start with the first question. I totally get it. Here's part of the problem with Christian education, though I'm 100% for it. Send your kid to Christian school. Great. But you know that the Christian schools, there are different philosophies of what that school is going to allow in their matriculation, in their student body. And a lot of people end up sending their kids to Christian schools because they're having trouble in public school behaviorally or whatever. So you never know what you might have in a student body. And not to mention now we're dealing with the most important topics like Christianity, soteriology, who God is, right? You run a risk of who knows what kind of theology you're going to get there. So there's a risk. There's a risk, obviously, sending your kids to public school. Right? So you never can relinquish your active participation in trying to learn what your kids are learning and respond to what they're learning by discipling your kids. That's going to happen whether you send them to the best-rated Christian school in Orange County or whether you are sending them to the public school that you think is still tolerable. The homeschool option, you're still, unless you're writing your own curriculum, you're still delegating a part of that process to someone who's writing whatever the curriculum is, right? Their questions, the way they're worded, what they are, how they go about and see their worldview, whatever it is. So there's always some delegation. And I take it as a compliment for you to say what you've said, and to say that you would trust Compass in terms of K-through-12 education or whatever it might be. That's great, because that's part of it. You need to trust the organization. If you're going to say this kid's going to go off to school from 8:00 till 2:00 or whatever, you've got to be able to say, I think good things are going on there. Have I ever considered it? I swore off Christian schools many years ago when I started in the pastorate 30 some years ago. And I'm now eating my words because I think about it almost every day, because the landscape has changed in 35 years. And I at one point said just, you know what? Someone else can do education of kids, we're here to preach the gospel, disciple, evangelize. And I had a school when I started. I got my first pastorate that I was given and we parted ways because I couldn't even use the facility, it had more employees. It was just a mess. So we parted ways, which was good. And I thought, great. And I kind of hung into that like, yeah, there are Christian schools around here, they can do the Christian school thing. Some of the public schools are still decent. Things are getting worse and worse and worse. And obviously, I'm at a place now where I thought, okay, I could see this happening. But I would have to tell you upfront if it would happen, if it's Compass Academy were going to be launched. Okay? It would probably be different than most Christian schools because I think what's needed today is a real education. And I don't mean classical and they've got to learn Latin. I just mean we really just need to teach the kids reading, writing and arithmetic with a kind of rigor that can produce kids who can think. I think every kid should be involved in church heavily. The church is already doing, there's a lot going on here. I would want to see and I don't even know if this is legal, but I would want to see, not that it matters too much, I would want to see an educational institution that is available for the people who are a part of this church. Right? You're part of this church. You're highly committed participant here then your kids can enroll in this. This isn't like send your kids from wherever. You know, here's the new new thing, the Compass Academy. Let's just do that. They were at Stonybrook or there at Capo Valley. They're going to go here now. No, it would



be like this is a ministry of our church, because if you can't homeschool, or you don't want to homeschool or whatever, come here and do this. But it would be much more pared down than you might think. Now, here's the other problem. Money. And I know people will give to this. I'm just not ready to unveil this because I don't have the structure in place yet. But I will say this. It's not beyond my vision. I really think and I'm not just spitballing, I really think it would take \$25 million to get this thing started. I want a facility, right? I want to be able to have a place that is functionally able to do this right. I want to be able to service the whole spectrum, and I want it to be a kind of education where people know my kids are really learning how to think, they're learning how to read, they're learning how to do math, they're learning STEM stuff. They're able to do what should be done without me trying to inject even a lot of theology or philosophy. I want them to learn. And that's the problem I see with education across the board is not much learning is going on. So yeah, and I've been more open with you in this question than I ever have publicly. But those who are close to me and our staff, they know it's increasingly a burden. We've bitten off a lot with church planting organization and a college. But whatever's next, if it happens before I go, then I would be pleased to leave behind when it's my time to be done, an educational offering. I just don't want it to take over the mission of the church. It cannot be seen as a whole life thing. You don't send your kids to Compass Academy and think that's it, right? No, no. You got to send them now to church. You've got to send them to youth group. You've got to send them to our kid's ministry. You as a parent have to be involved because this is not about just keeping your kids off drugs or learning the Bible. It's about doing what I don't think is being done very well. And that is I don't think there's a lot of great education going on. There are a lot of people who have been protected and shielded from a lot of the secular stuff. But they can't do math. They haven't read a whole book from cover to cover. And we just need to get back to some of those things. And it goes back to that Tech-Wise Family book, if you read it, in part because we've dumbed down our kids by throwing a screen in front of them. And not that I'm anti-technology. Matter of fact, I'm not as far as the author of the book. Yeah. And again, that's not to knock the Christian schools in the area. I get it. But they're trying to serve a lot of people. I would not want to serve a lot of people. I would want to serve our people because to me it's an extension of the church, the ministry of the church. And that's a different approach to it. And I think we might run into some problems, but God can solve those problems. But I'd want to build it, I'd want one of these buildings across the way and those are expensive, and I'd want to tool it for a good educational experience. And then I'd have to staff it and it would take some work. Well, if you've got 25 million we'll talk afterwards (audience laughing) and we can maybe get that going. (audience applauding) Be careful if you encourage me in this.

Question If there is a school that teaches my kids how to think in the future, I'd be very interested in that. So, Pastor Mike, it's a simple question, I think, but or maybe it's deceptively simple, but what does it mean that we're made in the image of God?

Pastor Mike Yeah. Yeah. If you ask a Mormon or... Yeah, I shouldn't even start with that because there's such theology that's attached to Mormon theology in our creation. Imago Dei or the fact that we are made in the image of God is not a statement about our features, our temporal features, but about our attributes and our function that we are in our attributes as spirit beings that are enmeshed in physical, tactile bodies, that we reflect the capacities that

are absent in the rest of creation, but reflect God's attributes. Which are rational attributes which need to be developed, obviously, emotional volitional attributes that reflect what we would say is personhood. Right? You cut down a tree, it's a living thing, but we don't think about it as murder. Well, unless you're crazy, some do, but it doesn't reflect... And it's not just animation, right? You have an animated animal, but it's not a human being. They're not wearing clothes, they're not building hospitals, they're not writing poetry. They're not made in the image of God. Part of that image of God is reflected in the immediate commission in Genesis. Right? Go exercise dominion over creation. Dominion is a regal word. You're in charge. You're going to take charge of the animals and the planet and you are going to be its dominion overseer, the steward of it. God is the steward of all things. He's the great God greatly to be feared above all gods. He's in charge of all things. But now he says, you guys be in charge of stuff. And so the function of human beings starts to reflect God's character. So in the image of God, the template of God, that might be a good way to say it, is that he's a functioning sovereign over things. He chooses and decides and directs things for others. And we are now endowed with that and we are told to do the same and we have capacities to do it. Reason and creativity and intelligence and reflection and reaction and all of that helps us do what God does. And that's why even in raising children, you should help them exercise dominion. That's why they should clean their rooms. That's why they should pick up their toys and put them in the toy box. That's why they shouldn't play with their food. I mean, all the things that you're trying to get them to take charge and exercise a function of leadership over parts of creation to make them useful and to do right with them. That's a function of God. And so to say we're made in the image of God has to do with our attributes as persons that set us apart from the rest of creation and it's the function that we're given. We're to master over things. "Male and female, he made them in his image" so we are unique in that. And that answers your question. It's not that we're made, you know, I thought of Mormons initially because, you know, they were made the way they are....he is. And it's funny because I was talking to somebody who graduated from the same Bible school as I did who argued with me about this. And it's obviously is a change in heart in his theology. But he says we are made in his physical image and God is physical. And he started quoting passages to me which anthropomorphize God, of course, the hand of God and all the rest. But that is not what God has taught and revealed about himself in the Scripture. He is spirit. John 4. He is not physical. We're not created in the physical image or template of God. We're made in the template of God in terms of who we are as spirit set apart from the rest of creation, intellect, emotion, and will, some would say, and functionally as leaders.

Question Curious what you think about the verse in Jude when it mentions Michael disputing the devil over the body of Moses?

Pastor Mike Yeah. It goes back to our cremation question. Even that passage and I don't know if I enlisted in the chapter I wrote or the editors took it out, but even that passage makes no sense if the body doesn't matter. Moses is dead. Okay? What does it matter? Right? It mattered to God because he dispatched Michael to go in and dispute about it. And there's something unique about Moses. They didn't know where his body ended up. And so then you have this kind of peeling back of the curtain into the spiritual realm where you see Satan and Michael talking about it, disputing about it, arguing about it. So God wanted it. And some have



argued, like Enoch, God wanted these two bodies already taken up, which would be an exception to this statement in First Corinthians 15 that Christ is the first of the glorified bodies because they have to be glorified or they're not here because you can't survive if you're not breathing on earth here. So anyway, if you're not glorified. So what happened to that? I don't know. Other than Michael was dispatched to get it to be and wherever God wanted it to be. Where that is, that's an interesting question. I'm assuming buried, but I don't know. But it does speak to the battle that again, that's a mysterious question too, because probably part of your curiosity, how do angels and demons battle each other? What is that about? And the most developed discussion of that, at least in the Old Testament, is the book of Daniel that describes the princes over nations. We see in Ezekiel 28 as well and Isaiah 14. But the spiritual realm is probably more involved in the physical realm than any of us dare to think. In that I mean the physical realm, not in just the physical realm, but the political realm. And in the political realm it seems that there's enough discussion in the Scripture that there are these spiritual entities who work over these physical political leadership structures. And whether it's a team or a monarch or a dictator or a president or senators that Satan is battling out or demons battling out with angels as to how that all goes. That, I would assume, because they too are made in the image of God, though they're not described that way, but they have intellect, emotion and will. They're working to dispute to get the things done through the agency of the monarchical leaders or the administrative governing leaders. So, how does that work? It's a battle of ideas somehow. In this weird passage, though, they're battling over the body. Well, there must have been some dispute in the sense that there's reasoning back and forth between Satan and Michael. Is there deal-making? I don't know. It's a curious passage, but I couldn't help but think of the previous question. It makes no sense unless God cares about the lifeless body of a dead person, which he does in that case, because it was one of the most important dead people, dead bodies in the Old Testament, obviously, Moses. Friend of God, think about it. He's called a friend of God twice in the Bible. Moses is probably more important than most of us think. We know him as a key figure in the Old Testament, but God treated him very differently. All the way down to caring very much in a celestial realm as to how his body was dealt with. All right.

Pastor Mike Stand with me and I'll pray for you. Because you need that after a potpourri of ideas and thoughts. Let me pray. God, we do ask that something here tonight would minister and help and encourage or motivate people, every last person would be edified in some way. That's been my prayer leading into the weekend. I pray it would be true in this service that everyone would sense something that would either click or satisfy or drive them on or convict them. So work in the hearts of the people who are here. Encourage them. Thanks for the time that we have and even the planning that's taken place sovereignly to just have this kind of free-formed service. And I know it's happened a lot in church history in certain settings, and it's just great to be a part of trying to tackle these questions and think through them together. So we appreciate it God. Dismiss this crowd now with a sense of your blessings. Thank you so much for our kids being able to play on that new playground tonight for just getting that done. We're so grateful for it and let it be a great time of even celebration as we watch and engage and get a cookie and some coffee.

In Jesus name, Amen.