



Q&A 2024 – Part 3

Pastor Mike Fabarez

Pastor Mike: Well, once a year we take a break from our exposition to do nothing but your questions and answers, which I hope to provide, that are biblical and proper. I want to take your questions this morning. Unscripted. No plants. It's all about you asking a sincere question about the Bible, about the Christian life, about theology, doctrine, whatever it might be. So we're just going to jump right in. We got two pastors with microphones and just raise your hand and we'll get started.

Question: First, I just wanted to thank you for everything that you do because you really help a lot of people with all of your wisdom. (audience applauds) Yeah. You know, I've been to a lot of churches around and you guys are really, really, really blessed. I don't know how you fit it all in your head, honestly, so I really don't.

Pastor Mike: Well, this has been the easiest question I've had so far.

Question: Well, my question is I was told by somebody that when you pray, like even if you know that God can do something, if you have any doubt, like, you know, he's capable, you know he can do it, but if you doubt at all that he will, that he won't hear your prayer.

Pastor Mike: Well, again, we use the phrase "don't hear." And usually that's just shorthand for he's not responding the way I want. Of course, God hears everything, right? He knows everything, hears everything, he's omniscient. So I just want to make sure when we use that phrase, if we do use that phrase, that we understand what we're saying, right? God is, of course, hearing every prayer. How he chooses to respond to our prayers, at least when it comes to wisdom he says in James Chapter 1, if you doubt, don't expect to receive anything from the Lord. So I know that he wants us to trust that he is a giver of good things and in that passage he gives without reproach so he's not going to withhold it from you if you ask. Wisdom is a very others-oriented request. The problem with our requests as he goes on to say in that book, James does, is that we ask selfishly with the wrong motives so that we can spend it on our pleasures. So it really is about us going to God and trusting that he wants to do good in responding to our prayers so that we might be a blessing and do good in this world. And yeah, I think we can offend God. We can grieve the Holy Spirit by not trusting God and just in talking about pleasing him, I think of Hebrews Chapter 11, "Without faith, it's impossible to please God." We need to trust him. That's the chiding of that phrase in James 1. You have to believe that he will give you what you are asking for. Now I can't pray just for anything. I pray according to the will of God. There are lots of qualifiers on our prayer life, but, I would be concerned if I'm praying and I'm full of doubt. The Bible says we should be concerned about that. So what does it take to increase our faith? Well, we need to go into the Scriptures. We need to read the Scriptures. We need to know the Scriptures. And the more we read, even in Hebrews Chapter 11, about all that God does in and through people who trust him, we're going to be bolstered to have more faith. So it's a legitimate concern, but it's not like the "name it, claim it, word faith" people are saying that this is some activation of your faith is the power. It's not the power. It's how God decides to respond. And he chooses to

respond with children who are trusting that he's the answer to the situation. I quoted last week in the passage in Second Kings about Hezekiah. And Hezekiah trusted in God, and he was at the end of his rope. And we need to be in a place where we're always thinking God is the God who will be the only real hope that we have. And at the end of Hezekiah's life when he was trusting the physicians instead of God, I mean, he wavered in that. So, yes, it's legitimate. If you're doubting, I think we need to go to not just trying to muscle up faith, because it's hard to do without a foundation. This isn't about trusting in something that we don't have reason to trust in. We have to learn the character of God better so that we can know that when we're asking for something that he approves of, it's in his Son's name, it's in the will of God, then we're going to ask with more confidence. So that's a legitimate question but it's not a code word, you know, password we type into a computer. It's not like oh, he didn't hear that, he didn't get the message. He gets the message every time. The question is what is he going to do in response to your prayer? And you know, the "prayer of a righteous man has great power as it is working," trying to quote the English Standard Version here. So there is something about you being righteous and righteousness is based on your trust of God. And that's not very satisfying because it's not a combination lock. It is about a relationship with someone who cares about how much you trust him. If we doubt, it's obviously relative. Right? Any doubt? All of us have some doubt at some point. And you can be, you know, paralysis by analysis because I keep thinking, well, I have some little bit of doubt. But even like the man who had the gift of God's healing that he was asking for someone else in Jesus' story about his child, he said, "I believe, but help my unbelief." I think all of us should be praying, God, I believe you, but help my faith to be stronger. I want to trust you. And the way to trust God is to fill your brain with stuff that we know God is proving through the narratives of Scripture and the principles of Scripture and the promises of Scripture to do what he says he's going to do, which isn't about you indulging in more pleasures and comfort and ease. It's about you being a useful tool of salt and light in this world and an agent of good, you know, being an ambassador of the message of the gospel or whatever else good he wants to do through you. You're "created in Christ Jesus for good works." So if our prayers are focused on that then we can have some confidence that God's going to respond. Does he always respond? I preach a lot of sermons on all the reasons God may not respond to your prayers. And there are dozens of them. But, yeah, we need to work on strengthening our faith.

Question: I read those two books on the Trinity you gave me and I still have doubts. I still do not believe that Jesus created everything that came into being. I mean, Jesus is the Word, I think he's spoken it into being. And we've heard our creator is the Father, not Jesus. When we refer to our creator, we say Father is our creator and so not Jesus. The Father thought about us before he created us. Jesus is kind of not there.

Pastor Mike: Okay, well, I would love to go into those two books I gave you, I'd love to go to the sections that you disagree on and look at the details of the argument to try and respond to it. So I want to go further into that. But let me just say I'm going to argue with you based on what God has revealed about process. When you think of the creator you think of the Father. Okay? I'm a Trinitarian because the Bible forces me into that conclusion. I think there's one God who exists eternally with a coequal set of persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And even in creation, if I look at creation and it says in Genesis Chapter 1 verse 2 that

"The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." Even the activity of God's Spirit informing what he forms in creation on day one is attributed to the third person of the Godhead. And then in John Chapter 1, you say I don't believe that the Word, which is the Son, because verse 14 says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." It says here, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was at the beginning with God. All things were made through him." I agree with the word "through," that preposition, I agree with that. He is what we call in theology the "agent of creation." Jesus is the "agent of creation." Just as I would say that the Holy Spirit is a "means of creation." The Father is the "architect of creation." But it says right there and it goes on to make it more emphatic, "All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." So I'm going to agree with what the Scripture says, not what can fit into your brain or my brain, because I'm saying that's what the Bible says. God the Father, is certainly the architect of creation, right? He is the architect of creation and the Spirit was involved, verse 2, and Jesus is the agent of creation. And they use the preposition "through" because "all things were created through him." The Bible is emphatically clear on that. And so I'm going to stick with what the Bible says, which I think the wording may in some way take the singularity of Christ being our creator off of that emphasis, because he is the agent of creation. I agree, the Father is our creator. The Son is the agent of creation, and the Spirit is the means of creation. Come back on that? No, okay.

Question: I did it to everything that she said. You are such a blessing. I have three, if that's okay. What are your thoughts on altar calls and what are your thoughts on Jeremiah 29:11? And how can you surrender to Jesus when life is throwing things at you? How can you have courage and joy despite the enemy's attacks? How can you apply Romans 5:3 through 5 in life circumstances?

Pastor Mike: To memorize your question. Okay. First question. What was your first question? (audience laughing) I got hung up on your third question. The altar calls. Altar calls. Well, there are no altar calls in the Bible. Altar calls, which is hard to pronounce apparently, became a staple in churches after the revivals, and a lot in the Second Great Awakening, but in particular Charles Finney, who used them in his evangelistic campaigns to have people come forward into things like the Anxious Bench, he would call it. Calling people up to make some kind of visual and consequential volitional response to the calling of the gospel. Right? There were no altar calls in the Bible. So people have used it as a means and a mechanism of having people kind of stand out and apart from the crowd and come forward and make some statement. And what I would say is, especially if you look at Finney, Charles Finney in history, you would say a lot of it seems manipulative. And I think that's why a lot of us would say, okay, well, I don't want to do altar calls the way that Finney did it. And since there are no altar calls in the Bible, there's no precedent from the Bible to say, well, I got to do altar calls. And I'm going to say the stepping out and fulfilling the function that people are trying to fulfill of saying, "I stand up, not ashamed to be with Christ," which, by the way, is kind of leaned into slowly and incrementally when pastors say things like, "Well, first let's pray and then slip up your hand with no one looking around, no eyes are looking around," okay? And now they don't know what's coming if they're new to church. Because later I'm going to say, "Now step out in front of everybody with their eyes open and come down to the front." I'm thinking, okay,

that's kind of the manipulative part. I'll slip up my hand if no one's watching that I think I should become a Christian today. And then it's like, we're going to sing this last song, "Just as I am" or whatever, and then you're going to come forward, and now you're going to have to meet with the pastor at the front. I'm not into all of that. And I would say, if you are trying to fulfill the function of someone proudly and boldly standing up, not being ashamed of Christ, there's something God already gave us which is timeless and is in the Bible and that's called baptism, water baptism. So I'm already fulfilling that function. And when I became a young pastor here in Orange County at 24, I think is when I started and became a senior pastor at 25 or 26, I got a lot of grief for not having an altar call because that's what they did in the church that I pastored. It had been around for 30-plus years. And so here I was as a young guy and they thought I had, you know, thrown out the Bible, you know, like you try to throw out the organ, which took me a few years to throw out (audience laughing). But, to throw out altar calls was really hard because they were conditioned to think that's biblical. But again, my whole job as a pastor was to say what the Bible says. And what function does this serve? And, you know, microphones, I didn't get rid of microphones because they serve an important function. I don't find another way to serve that function. But I don't see that altar calls in the way that they're often manipulative, and they seem to get people to do something that God has already told us how to do with baptism. So I'm not big on altar calls. But I'm not against them. I mean, if you want to do an altar call, as long it is not manipulating people, whatever. But I don't know. Jeremiah 29:11. It's a statement and maybe I'll just read it for the sake of everybody in the auditorium here. Jeremiah 29. Obviously, Jeremiah is about to send these exiles into Babylon. And he says, let me just start with the verse in front of it, verse 10, "For thus says the Lord: when 70 years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and fulfill my promise to bring you back to this place." That's the whole point. God's going to send you in, you're at the front end of 70 years then you're going to come back, okay? And then based on that statement he says, "For I know," for is my key here, for, based on that, "I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then," verse 12, "you will call upon me and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me, and find me, when you seek me with all your heart." So they are in the doghouse for the discipline of idolatry and compromise. God sends them to Babylon and you can imagine I'm going to die in Babylon. But God has a plan for you. Israel is on the table, and that is, Israel is going to have "a future and a hope," and they're going to be restored under Zerubbabel, Nehemiah and Ezra, all of that's going to be fulfilled. So God has a plan. He hasn't given up on Israel. And he says it elsewhere in the book. The sun and the moon would have to go away before God's covenant promised for Israel to go away. But they were afraid because they are being conquered by a foreign power. So it's really that's the immediate context. Is there a principle there? And this is where people get, especially young Christians, they get very biblical, right? They throw out their altar call. They read a verse and like that's not about us. Well, it's not about us. But there is a principle here at least that we can say is transferable to the Church. God does have a future for us, right? "He's going to come again, receive us unto himself that where he is we will be also." That's a big hope, right? "He'll never leave me, never forsake me," Hebrews Chapter 13. Just like John Chapter 14. These are promises that give me a hope. And can I quote that and think about New Testament promises? Sure you can. It's not the original intent of that passage. Right? So I can often teach the right thing from the wrong passage, which I think a lot of people have done in

quoting that. But if some people are trying to claim something about the United States of America, not about the Church, but about the United States of America, by reading that verse, which I've seen a lot, you can't do that. This is not about modern countries, right? It does have applicability to the Church. Does that help? Okay. And the third question is super complicated but it's where we all live, right? How can we find joy in the midst of all the things that seem like they suck our joy? That's the short version. A summary of your question. You probably didn't want to use the word "suck" in your question, but there it is. Suck your joy. How do we do that? A couple things. When circumstances get us down we feel like how can we be joyful? In the fourth chapter of Philippians Paul is trying to make the point, right? In the end, and I'll go back to the key verse, but he ends with, I've learned the secret of contentment. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Now this is a prison epistle. He's in prison. And so circumstances are bad and should cause him to not be joyful, not be happy. But the preceding sections say you Philippians need to be joyful. "I'll say it again rejoice," right? And he speaks about anxiety in that same passage saying you need to make sure you eschew the anxiety and the fears, just like Jeremiah is saying to his generation, because God is a God who "will supply all your needs according ... to Christ Jesus," that's the way this passage ends. So Paul is trying to tell these people, there are a lot of reasons you're going to be bummed out, but don't. Look to something transcendent. And the transcendent truth is where he's taking us as Christians in the truth, he's taking us into a kingdom, and the Church will survive. Right? He's going to build his Church, "and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." So I cannot get around the fact that there are many tribulations that are going to be unpleasant. Your life and my life are going to be unpleasant, and we've got lots of unpleasant things between now and the end of our lives, and some of it will seem unbearable. But according to the Bible, it's not unbearable because God is not going to abandon us, and God is going to give me the fortitude to get through it. Paul uses the word "grace" in Second Corinthians 12, right? "My grace is sufficient for you," he quotes God. God is going to give enough favor on us to get us through the hard times. Are we going to be happy every day? Not necessarily, but we do need to try and drive through the circumstances to find peace. And that's why I think the word "contentment," at least in that context, is synonymous with the goal which is joy. I want to be able to say it's all okay. Like Jesus in the storm on the Sea of Galilee. He's asleep on the cushion, probably because he was exhausted, but also it shows the contrast between his disciples who were freaking out and him being at peace. We need to have the kind of peace that makes people say, I don't understand, because he says it's "a peace that surpasses all understanding" Circumstances usually determine people's moods. Our mood should be transcendent of our circumstances, and that's a hard thing to do. Unless, again, back to your question, the Scripture has to govern my thinking. What is true about me and what's true about me is Romans Chapter 8 verse 18, that nothing in the present order of things, there's "no suffering," in this world, "that is comparable to the glory that will be revealed to me." How many times have I said it from this platform? The Christian life is not about the "here and now." It's about the "then and there." So that's a constant looking forward beyond the horizon of this life, right? "Seek first the kingdom." The kingdom hasn't come yet. "The kingdom come, your will be done." That's what I'm praying for. And I want Christ to come back to usher in the kingdom. The kingdom is coming when Christ arrives, he'll "take his great power and begin to reign." "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever." So I have to say it's hard now but we're



getting somewhere great. I've used this illustration before and you've heard a lot of my sermon so I'll just say bear with me. But when my kids were little and we took them to Florida because we said there's a better Disneyland than the one we have here, that's arguable, I understand, but it's bigger at least. I can tell you this it's more expensive. I'm going to take these kids just in the prime of their childhood to Orlando. Now they got excited about this. We showed them all the brochures. We got them all hyped up. It's going to be great. But the day that we got there, try to get from Orange County to Orlando and get settled in and get to sleep, you're not doing anything fun that day, right? I mean, even if it's fun getting on the plane, it's fun for 20 minutes to see it take off and then the kids are like when are we going to be done? Well, we're not even started, man. We just took off. We're not even out of California yet. So that whole day is a struggle. And just like Paul said in Acts 14, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of," Disney or, "God." It's going to take a lot of tribulations. And I quoted that passage often to my children that day, "through many tribulations." Right? So just hang in there. We're going to go somewhere great and that's supposed to get them through, you know, the immature, disheartened, crestfallen, this is a terrible vacation, dad. And that's how some Christians feel, disillusioned. This is terrible. This is the Christian life? It seems really hard. It is hard. But it's going to get good. And so we're looking forward to that.

Question: My question is as a believer we've been given the Holy Spirit. I'm wondering in the New Jerusalem is the Holy Spirit still with us? And where is he?

Pastor Mike: Well, I think he is the omnipresent perception of the Godhead. Not that every member of the Godhead is not omniscient, but there is something about the perception and the presence. The omnipresence of the Godhead is affected, and this may be two dichotomizing of the Trinity, but trichotomizing to be precise. But the Spirit of God, I think, is going to be infusing the whole world. So will he dwell in us the way he does now? Even that we don't fully understand. What does that mean? He's not in any pocket of my interior. My thoracic cavity doesn't have the Spirit in it between my kidney and my liver. You know, this is an analogy, a spatial analogy to prove a connection. And so the connection of the Spirit with me is different than my non-Christian neighbor, a relational connection. That connection is going to be unmitigated by my flesh. So the Spirit's activity, I think, in our lives will be better than it is now. Will he still use the nomenclature that the Spirit's going to be in us? I don't know. I just know he's now in us as a guarantee of our inheritance. So I know that's kind of the "Telos" the end view, at least, in our present dispensation, that's Ephesians Chapter 1, I know that the Spirit's presence in my life is guaranteeing that I'm going to get to the kingdom. Now, your question is a good one. What happens to my relationship with the Spirit when I get to the kingdom? I'm not sure exactly, other than I can't imagine the Spirit not being actively all over in the world. Jesus will be seated on a throne in the New Jerusalem, and in that sense the presence of God will be fully here on earth because the God-man, Jesus Christ, will be ruling in the capital city. The Father is going to have a new heaven that he's living in. He's spirit, John 4, he "dwells in unapproachable light," First Timothy 6. So I think he envelops some weird dimension called heaven. Jesus is on earth with fingernails, toenails, and kneecaps, and the Spirit is an invisible presence of God all over the planet. So I think he'll be active. I think our relationship with him will be better. And, I assume the nomenclature will not



change. He will probably still be spoken of as he's in us, because that's a term of closeness. When Jesus said to the disciples, "The Spirit is now with you, but then he will be in you." Of course, he's talking about post-Acts 2, right? That was a statement of your relationship with God. The Godhead is going to be even closer. Spirit is with you. He's going to be in you, whatever that means, right? So does that help? Okay, that's a good question.

Question: My question is this. George Washington the first president of the United States said the relation to morality is very important to the society here in this world, right? So the Bible says in John 3:6, if you're born in flesh, you're thinking in flesh all the time. If you're born in the Spirit, you're thinking in the Spirit all the time. So why if we come to the church, I suppose it's because God changed our life to be a much better person. I suppose we are Christians if we come into the church every Sunday because I suppose we are here for a much better life, right? For Jesus Christ changed our hearts and changed our lives. But why happening in the assuming the church is happening we're thinking in the flesh all the time.

Pastor Mike: Because the Bible is very clear. This is not a polarized contrast of either-or. Okay? Here, I'll prove it to you. First Corinthians Chapter 3. Well, I need to compare it to Chapter 1. In Chapter 1 he calls them Christians. Paul writes to the Corinthians and he calls them Christians. But then he says that the division in the church in Chapter 3, you're acting like, and he uses the word "flesh," "Sarke." You're acting like fleshly Christians. In other words, you're operating with fleshly principles. And that's why you're saying, I'm a Paul. I'm of Apollos, and I'm of Christ. You're doing that because you are not fully thinking like you should think. And that's why even the posing of your question, you spoke it in absolute terms and I disagreed with your absolute terms because it's not absolute. I mean, everything in Scripture would remind us you're challenged, like in Galatians 5, is to make sure that you keep in step with the Spirit, that your mind is not given to the flesh. If you read the evidence of the flesh is clear and he starts listing all these things, let's just pick one, outburst of anger. That's an expression of the flesh, unbridled. Okay? In this room, let's just divide it up into Christians and non-Christians. So we got let's just say all these people on this side are Christians and mean got a lot of non-Christians over here, but these are real Christians. The Spirit of God dwells in them, right? Do they think in the flesh? And I could ask the question, how many of you had outbursts of anger this week? Well, you could have an outburst of anger and well, clearly you were acting like Paul said to the Corinthians in First Corinthians 3 in a fleshly way. So this is not a polarized contrast of either-or. It's you should be thinking and following the Spirit. And I know the statements that you're thinking of in Romans, perhaps, that where he says, if you don't walk according to the Spirit you're not a child of God. It should change the trajectory of our lives. But there's nothing you do in keeping with the Spirit that's sinful and every Christian in the room has sinned this week. So there are fleshly expressions, and this is the battle that Peter admits to when he says, "The passions of my flesh, they're at war with my soul." So my heart is regenerate. Your heart, I trust, is regenerate, and our flesh fights that. And therefore every sin is an expression of me giving in to the flesh. And the Bible says, don't even start thinking that you're not going to be tempted. Right? And that's First Corinthians 10, right? "If you think you stand take heed lest you fall." "No temptation overtaking you except that which is common to man." So he's talking to Christians here about you're going to be tempted to think in a fleshly way as a reborn Christian who's supposed to be following the Spirit. So that's



why we don't do it. I would love to think we do it perfectly, but Romans 8 gives us the answer, because one day we're going to have our redemption of the body. And that's where in the body "Soma," the Greek word soma, includes this principle of our fallenness, sarke in Greek, the flesh. And my fleshly desires will no longer be fighting my spirit. And that's what's coming with the redemption of my body. And then I won't have a sin problem, right? I got sin problem now, you got a sin problem now, every Christian in the room's got a sin problem. We do things on the flesh list in Galatians 5 periodically. I hope we're doing it a lot less than when we were non-Christians. But now, as Christians we're trying to keep in step with the Spirit. Is that getting the essence of your question? Yeah. You can't think in simple contrasted either-or categories there.

Question: My question for you is regarding different types of healthcare treatments that I've been seeing I feel that seem kind of eerie. One of them is called kinesiology, where people, like put their hand out and the chiropractor or practitioner would like tests where their allergies are based on if their hand gets weak or something like that. As well as I'm seeing in my field of sports medicine that people are giving books out the body keeping score of the techniques was created by a guy who says how he could connect with the universe. So that's a big red flag right there. It just made me feel very uncomfortable that this was being taught at sports medicine conferences to other practitioners. And I actually called out one of the presenters like, hey, do you give kind of like a heads up to your patients that this is where this technique comes from? They're like, oh no, we just tell them they're harmless exercises So like, well, what if they have a conviction regarding this? So I had a heart-to-heart talk with that gentleman knowing that he's a nonbeliever. I just felt that was my conviction there. So how do you develop more discernment when it comes to areas? Because I just feel like the Holy Spirit kind of popped in like, oh, this is a no-go here. But like, how can I know like for sure? Because they bring up the signs of physiologically this is what happens. And it's similarly your cells and more cell turnover like there's this technique called E or PEMF. You use the earth's frequency to help stimulate the cells. So what are your ways that you could give tips of having more discernment with that?

Pastor Mike: Yeah okay. It's going to get me in trouble. (audience laughing) I'm reading a book right now. It's got a lot of data about the placebo effect. Okay. And to start with the goal of all the people that gather for these conferences. I mean, the goal is to be a facilitator of better health and that usually is determined by whether people feel better. And so that's the goal. And the goal we can say has one path that is traditionally well traveled because of, at least somewhat understandable scientific rules of more of this will make this happen and more of that will make that happen, less of this will make this happen and therefore the patient will either heal or get better. And then there's a whole tributary toward the same goal. Well, we'll make them feel better, but we'll use vibrations of the universe or we'll, you know, put hands over an energy and all this positive energy back in the day, in my day, with the crystals and all the stuff that people were talking about to get you... All I'm saying is I know this is real because it worked takes me back to the book I'm now reading about just extensive deep studies on how people's brains when they think that they've got the answer end up creating an effect in their experience, and then they report success. And so I'm saying, and we know what we're giving them, sugar pills or, you know, whatever. Nothing. Gelatin. But I'm



going to say God is the creator of the rules of this universe. We continue to learn them when we go and talk about neutrinos or quantum mechanics or physics, all those things, when we get down to the building blocks we're still learning about the universe. But we're learning about the universe, as the pioneers of science would say in Western civilization, we're learning to think God's thoughts after him. God thought all this up. God was the architect of all these things and the Spirit was the means and the Son was the agency of creation. Nevertheless, God created the world and now we're trying to figure out how it all works. And as we figure that out, sometimes we can interrupt what's going on in a body by injecting certain chemicals into it and we can see this effect. But don't think because a doctor's prescribing it, it's been FDA approved that we even understand exactly how it works. All you have to do is take a physician's desk reference, open it up, and start reading through this particular medicine that causes this particular relieving of a symptom and you'll realize as you get into the small print that the doctors and chemists will say we have no idea why this works, right? We don't know why it works, but it works. But at least there's a conditioned double-blind study that would say we know this consistently works. Nevertheless, we're still figuring out a lot of things about the universe that God created. And I would say when I see something that has no basis in some tried-and-true path that there is a physiological cause and effect, quid pro quo, if this happened, then this happens and there's a connection, then I'm going to be massively skeptical of it. Right? And I'm going to say I'm not interested in giving people a pathway to go down it just because someone's testimonial in a study or someone's testimonial on the Internet, worse yet, or worse yet, someone saying something on YouTube. I'm not going to have people chase that. So I am much more conservative about traditional approaches to good health and remedies for diseases and all the rest. And, I would like to stay on the path of what I think is at least tested and we can at least see the connections. When you get to these other things I think, yes, we're starting to delve into the kinds of pseudoscience. It's not even that. I mean, this para-science kind of like we know that there's not something that we can see in a microscope that makes this work, but this is like something spiritual or something cosmic. Okay. I'm going to say, yeah. I'm not going to indulge in any of that. Because when it comes to the God who's in charge of the universe he says don't chase these things. I can go back to Deuteronomy 18 and see this is a concern he has about us chasing other things. God will use pharmacological solutions. But even in that, as Hezekiah has come up in this service, I don't want to trust my physicians or my pharmacists, I want to trust God, but I'm going to utilize these things. If I'm bleeding I'm going to use a bandage, right? Because I know how it works. It will stop bleeding, helps coagulation, put pressure on it. All of that is part of like this is a tried-and-true way to solve this problem as opposed to, "Well I have a new way, it's put this rock in your pocket and carry it around and put some oil on your big toe, and then it's going to all be good," right? I'm thinking, well wait a minute, explain it to me. Now I know everyone's not a chemist. Not everyone even thinks that way. And some people don't really want to know how things work. Now some of us in the room want to know how things work, and I think there should be some reasonable explanation of how it works. And if not and if it's a hocus pocus vibrations of the universe, right? Someone can say, well, it's not yet quite developed. And I may say, okay, maybe you're onto something. Because if you study quantum mechanics, you study physics, you can start to realize there's a lot we don't understand yet. But I'm not good at having people chase, especially with their good money, solutions that are not at least somewhat proven. And I say



somewhat proven and reasonable and rational and can be explained in a rational way. And yes, there's a lot of eastern philosophy that's tied into a lot of health. Think about it. Every culture has wanted grandma to feel better. Everybody's trying to chase a solution, a medicinal solution. And so there are all kinds of things cultures have been doing. They haven't been Western thinkers to try and make sure I can rationally explain this. And we are Western and Western thinkers have an advantage, at least in part because truth is always corresponding to reality and reality if it's understood helps us determine what truth is. And that's where the mysticism, particularly of eastern cultures, that have invaded Western culture and become all the interest of Western thinkers. I'm thinking, okay, I'm not interested. And I know that hacks a lot of people off. And people have left our church because they think Pastor Mike doesn't believe in that. Okay. You don't leave our church because of that. But I'm not going to let you pitch it in the lobby or get our mailing lists to sell your stuff. And I'm not going to recommend it. It doesn't mean, you know, I'm not picketing your clinic or whatever. So, yes, I don't want to just blame it on my feelings. And it could be the Spirit convicting you of sin in this regard. Right? But whatever is not of faith is sin. Romans 14. So if you don't have a clear conscience you shouldn't do it. But I would also want to look deeper. Is there a reasonable, rational explanation for how and why this works? And if even I don't understand it on a chemical level can I at least see that there are, you know, studies, double-blind studies and that we are confident that this particular element has this particular reaction. Because testimonials, we can do that all day long. We can talk to Mormons all day long and think their religion is great because of the experience they've had. We got to talk about truth. All right. Does that help a little bit? Okay.

Question: It's a bit of a heavy one for me today. This year my father passed away. He wasn't a bad man but a broken man. A victim of depression, alcoholism, chronic back pain, and the difficulties of the trials in this world. I did my best to encourage and support him. I prayed for him. I prayed with him. I shared the lessons I learned from church but he didn't listen. It became a toxic environment and despite our intentions for him to get help and support he didn't want it. How does one tolerate those who don't accept the gospel?

Pastor Mike: Tolerate? What do you mean by that?

Question: Like when you share the gospel but the people don't listen or accept it.

Pastor Mike: So how do you sleep at night when that happens? Or how do you tolerate it? What do you mean by tolerate it? How are you at peace with that?

Question: Well, in a way of speaking.

Pastor Mike: Okay, well, I'm going to say you don't. In other words, Paul, Romans Chapter 9 verses 1 and 2, he's clearly not at peace. He has unceasing anguish in his heart because people are going to hell because they're rejecting the gospel. So I know we can't be copacetic and peaceful about people we love who reject the gospel. We just can't. Okay? How do we come to grips with the reality of it? Here's what the Bible says: God is just. And justice, you just need to know that justice as a synonym is "right." He's right. How he responds to his



creatures is right, based on what they know, based on what they do, based on how they act, based on how they respond to truth. God is right. So he's always going to do what is right. Your father was not Jeffrey Dahmer, right? No, not even close, I hope. How many people did your dad murder and eat? No one. Right?

Question: No, but he had better days.

Pastor Mike: He had better days. Okay, I get that. God is not going to treat your father in the afterlife like he'll treat Dahmer, like he'll treat any other person that we notoriously know. This person was wicked and evil, right? Was your dad a sinner? Yes. If he rejected the gospel then he's in the Lord's hands. Right? Your DNA connection to him, or your familial connection with him, may make it harder for you to grip the truth that God is going to do right with that person. But when you're driving up the I-5 and you're going up to LA and you're looking at all the cars and you see guys driving, you think, oh, God's going to deal with him however he should deal with him. That's called justice. God's going to do right with that person on Judgment Day, and he's going to do right with your dad and he's going to do right with my dad, he's going to do right with my uncle. He's going to do right with all the people who I know. And so the rejection of the gospel is massively disappointing. How do we tolerate it? If that means how am I okay with it? We've never been okay with it. After it happens as David said when his kid died, there's nothing else we can do. The only hope we can hold out is the zeal of sharing the gospel while they're alive. And in Chapter 10 of Romans, Paul goes, well, here's what I'm doing. But in Chapter 9, my heart is broken. So I understand at this particular point since your dad passed away, there's nothing else we can do. But you can be grateful that our God is just, and he will justly respond to your dad, even as a non-Christian, God will justly respond to him. He will not do any more than what he deserves. And in that regard there is some comfort that hell is not a uniformed experience for everyone. And that's all I can say. And all I can say is one thing that would help us is to care more about people who aren't biologically connected to us as we care for our biological connections, and we would start to care about the lost in our neighborhood, the lost that you work with, the lost that you drive next to on the freeway, the lost that you're eating lunch next to in the lunchroom. Those people need Christ as much as your dad does, and your dad's opportunities may be done. "Appointed once for man to die and then the judgment." He's passed that marker of death. So there's nothing else to do. There's no what the Catholic Church did in the 14th, 15th centuries. We can't do anything for the dead who have passed on. And so all we can do is give him up and entrust him to the judge who does rightly. And in that regard all I can tell you is there's only opportunity with those who are alive. So we pour our effort and we even motivate ourselves with loved ones that we know who are lost. I've had loved ones in my family who have died who are not Christians. All I can do with that is be motivated to deal with people who have opportunity. And you have opportunity as long as you have breath in your body. So God is just, God's is going to deal with your dad appropriately. We don't want to start talking like the world, though, and think that every problem your dad had he was a victim of. All of us are agents and as C.S. Lewis liked to say the dignity of humanity will be proven by God's judgment. In other words, we're going to have people dignified in being responsible for their decisions, right? The bottle to your dad's mouth was his decision. And it took plenty of those decisions without any compulsory stuff going on in his body. I guarantee you one way I could have prevented

alcoholism in his life, if you want to call it that, and that is never to have touched alcohol. But he did. And all I'm saying is there are certain things we've got to say, yeah, they may have become vices in his life but these were things that he is going to be held responsible for to the extent that he should be responsible. There can be things that happened in his life that were part of his childhood and maybe there was some victimhood there and some things grew out of that. God is going to take all that into account, because God takes everything into account when he deals with his creatures. So in that regard, I just can trust God in that. I don't know if that's a lot of comfort but when you use the word tolerate, that's when I'm like, wow, I don't know how we tolerate it other than the fact that now there's nothing else you can do. Turn your efforts toward what we can do. And that's with the living.

Question: Speaking of C.S. Lewis, I've read that he believed in purgatory. Can you briefly explain purgatory? And if this is a salvific issue? If it's true that he believed in it is it wise to read his books?

Pastor Mike: Yeah. As long as you eat the fruit and spit out the pits. C.S. Lewis was masterful with his pen. He was a great writer, a very good communicator. He was not orthodox in all areas of his theology. You have to remember where he came from. He was an academic at Oxford. He taught in the literature department, and he mastered the classics and in English literature and knew Latin and Greek. And, you know, he was a scholar, a brilliant mind. Opposed to Christianity, investigates Christianity, becomes a Christian. Now he's a very sought-after spokesperson for Christianity because he's so good with communication. He's Mr. Communication and he's a great writer. So he becomes a favorite of a lot of us who read him and say, there are few people that write like C.S. Lewis does. And I've studied even his letters where he talks about how to communicate and it's brilliant. I put a lot of those quotations into my homiletic classes, because they're very helpful for us as preachers to make sure we follow some of these basic principles. But it doesn't mean everything he believed, even in the context of the Church of England that he was a part of as an Anglican, that I'm going to affirm and I'm going to say, yeah, he had some problems. Affirmations of doctrines like purgatory, is that a salvific issue? That was your question. I'm going to say not necessarily. The reason it seems like a package deal is because the Roman Catholics who teach purgatory are also the ones who talk about the nature of faith. And the nature of faith, as it was taught over 500 plus years ago, was that we are saying two different things by this. We believe that you're saved by faith alone. Roman Catholics talk about the treasury of Christ's riches and favor stored up and it's brokered through the church. And the church is as important to the truth of your life as the Bible is. All of those things I say are wrong. I will call it all blasphemy. And then they add to it their view of purgatory which was developed in the Latin Church and the Roman Catholic Church and throughout the centuries. So purgatory in and of itself. Right? I could understand where someone would say, is there something that makes sense here textually? The closest we would get is First Corinthians Chapter 13 when Paul is talking about the Bema Seat of Judgment and he talks about people who come live their lives as Christians and then there's wood, hay and straw, gold, silver and precious stones and if all they got is a bunch of wood, hay and straw they will be saved, though as by fire, and they will suffer loss, fire, suffering. Ah! There's our passage on purgatory. It's not about purgatory, okay? It's an analogy about gold, silver and precious stones don't burn.



Wood, hay and straw they burn. And the point is what you do for Christ is going to last, what you do for yourself doesn't matter. Sin is not going to matter. It's going to get burned up. Will you suffer loss? Just like if you spent all year working on your pie for the pie contest at the Orange County Fair and they laughed at your pie because it was terrible. You'd suffer, right? It's not purgatory and it's not hell, but it's you saying I really messed around in the kitchen and I should have done a better job on this pie. We should all probably do better in our Christian lives, but some of us are doing better than others, and there'll be less suffering of loss. It's not purgatory. Purgatory is unbiblical because Colossians is very clear that I am "fully qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints in light." I'm fully qualified. The thief on the cross, fully qualified. He never got baptized, never gave a dime to the church. He is fully qualified because of Christ. So C.S. Lewis is wrong. Just like he's wrong about some of the views of the origin of the universe. He's wrong about several things but it doesn't mean that he doesn't speak to the core issues of Christianity in his book Mere Christianity, saying things that need to be proved. There is a God. He has revealed himself. We should respond to his revelation, great. Working out of his doctrine, it's not great. So am I going to say... And here's the old fundamentalism of 100 years ago in the 1920s people saying if everything cannot be affirmed as orthodox you need to take that writer and get rid of him or that preacher and get rid of him. I would say probably not the guy I would choose to be my pastor. And I'll make that clear. If C.S. Lewis was at a church in Oxford and I said, I'm a Christian, am I going to go there? I would say, no, I'm not going to go there. I'm going to find a church. The guy may not be as eloquent, he may not be as persuasive, but if he's preaching the Bible, I'll go there. Lewis did good for Christianity. He still does good for Christianity. A very brilliant man. All you got to do is read a lot of his stuff and you go, man, this guy's creative in human communication. So, as long as you can intelligently eat the fruit and spit out the pits, I don't have a problem with you reading Lewis, but he's not God and he's worse in his doctrine than your pastoral staff. I can say that. He's better at communicating and writing than all of us combined. I can say that too. Yeah. Hope that helps.

Question: So everything is according to God's plan, correct? So does that mean that we don't have free will?

Pastor Mike: No. You have free will.

Question: But if everything is according to God's plan, would it not have been all planned out from the beginning?

Pastor Mike: It is all planned out from the beginning, yes.

Question: Therefore meaning that everything that we choose is not really what we want to do. But it's already been planned?

Pastor Mike: It is what you want to do. And I only affirm both of them because the Bible affirms both of them. And I understand this is an age-old dilemma, right? How can God be sovereign? And here's really what he gets to. And how are we still held responsible? And so I would go home today and I would read Romans Chapters 9, 10 and 11 and ask yourself



those same questions. What we end up saying is, yes, God is sovereign and he uses our sin, he uses our rebellion to accomplish his plan. But in the big scheme of God, if he works everything after the counsel of his will, which I would quote from Ephesians Chapter 1, I'm all in favor of the fact that God is sovereign over all things. Let me ask you this. Do you believe that God was sovereignly having Jesus crucified on the cross? Do you believe that?

Question: Yeah.

Pastor Mike: Okay. Do you think God planned that?

Question: Yeah.

Pastor Mike: Is it a good thing or a bad thing that he died on the cross?

Question: A good thing.

Pastor Mike: Oh, okay. So I'm going to find an innocent guy who didn't do a crime and I'm going to frame him and I'm going to have a kangaroo court, and I'm going to kill him. Would you let me, would you vote in favor of that?

Question: No.

That's a bad thing then, right? See you answered correctly, it is a good thing. We call it Good Friday. But it was a bad thing. How is it in the world that God accomplishes a good thing through a bad thing? An innocent man suffers. But it's all according to the Scriptures. God had planned this out. God's planning everything after the counsel of his will. Everyone is still responsible which is really where the rub is. How can God hold us responsible? And in the argument I'm going to make you read in Romans is how is Pharaoh held responsible. If God accomplishes the Exodus and the writing of the Pentateuch through Moses, through miraculous signs that were all used to wedge Pharaoh to let him do it, right? All of this works out. We're still reading Genesis through Deuteronomy. It's the foundation of the Old Testament. All of that worked out for God's plan. And yet Pharaoh is held responsible and he's in hell. How does that work? Right? His point is who are you to answer back to God? And the point is very unsatisfying and that is that God is still accomplishing his plan through the bad and the evil decisions that people make and God is still holding them responsible for the evil decisions that they make. The culpability of people to choose to do wrong is their decision. Now, when I say you have free will it's not entirely free, right? There are a lot of things you can't choose to do because it's not in your nature to do it. We would say when it comes to Christianity and theology and we talk particularly about sin, we would say, okay, in a very specific way we would say, you do not have the freedom as a sinner to choose to do all these godly things. You can't seek God it says in Romans 3. You're not created in Christ Jesus to do good works. You're a sinner, right? You're unrighteous. All of that is your nature, and by nature you're a sinner, and therefore you do what is in your nature. Just like you and I can't jump and touch the moon. I'm not within my volition to do that. I'm not by nature capable of doing that. Just like if you put a piece of meat, as RC Sproul says, and a salad in front of a



lion and he's free to choose between the two, right? He's still going to choose the piece of meat because that's his nature. And so as sinners before Christ changes our hearts, before we regenerate, we choose to sin and we're enslaved to sin. And as Martin Luther talked about the bondage of the will, we're bound in sin until God frees us. So here's the book I would have you read after you read Romans 9, 10 and 11 tonight, is J.I. Packer's little book, and I'll start you on this one, called *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. He deals with the issues that you've just asked about. Is God sovereign? Yes. Do we have free will? Yes. Are we still held responsible for all our decisions? Yes. So some have illustrated this way, I won't name who it is, but it's as though God is an architect and draws out all the plans and all of it's going to be built the way that God has planned it. But everything that's done within the plan is done freely and people are choosing to do the things that it takes to build this. But God is a God who's making this happen. Now, there are a lot of theories about, well, maybe we can work this out to make freedom more free. And I'm just saying, ultimately, the freedom that I have is subject to and contingent on God's freedom. God is the one with the true freedom, the ultimate freedom that is completely free. And he does do it in accordance with his nature. I'm an agent in this world who God has given freedom to but my freedom is subject to limitations, and it's always going to work out, ultimately according to the predetermined plan of God. But Packer's book, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, we have it in our bookstore. If you want to go further and deeper, go to Schreiner's book. He's the editor of a book called *Still Sovereign*. And then if you really are a brainiac, you know, super brainiac, read D. A. Carson's dissertation, called *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*. That'll step you right up. There's the entry-level, Packer's book, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. Schreiner's book, a bunch of articles from a lot of different guys, very good stuff called *Still Sovereign* and then Carson's book on *God's Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*. That's a big question. And I'm surprised you're the first one to ask it this weekend, because I usually get it in every service. The answer's yes.

Question: My name is Nick. Actually, first time at this church, so it's a pretty exciting introduction. I have a question about biblical literalism. Since Jesus never literally said anything in English and for those of us who do not study the Hebrew or Greek texts, through what present-day lens should we be reading, praying and applying our evolving English interpretation of the Word of God?

Pastor Mike: Yeah. All words represent realities and we do it imperfectly. And as one Italian translator once said every translator is a betrayer. So I understand that we are in a difficult situation studying the Bible in English because it's not the language in which God has God-breathed out these things. When Jesus spoke, I think he spoke more in Koine Greek than people think. Everybody says, all scholars like to say he spoke in Aramaic, which is a dialect of Hebrew. I think he did occasionally. But in his teaching, public teaching, I think he spoke Greek. Not anybody agrees with that. But, God chose to breathe out his text and govern the writing of the text in the New Testament in common Koine Greek which was the successor of Attic Greek, which the classics were written in. Hebrew in the Old Testament, with some sections of Aramaic in Ezra and Daniel. So we've got these ancient languages and if we were in an upper class, even upper middle class of 150 years ago, you would be studying in school English because that's in the King's language. You would be studying Greek to study the New



Testament. You'd be studying Hebrew to study the Old Testament, you'd be studying Latin to study the theologians of the first thousand years of the Church. So that went away. And you're sitting here asking the question in a day where people aren't even pressed to learn these languages anymore. But they were. They used to be. And if you're going to master theology you got to learn these languages because you've got to figure out what it says directly. As someone once said, and I forget who said this, and I shouldn't say it probably, but it's 11:00 service. Yeah, no I won't. I've started it now, haven't I? It's usually the Greek prophets that use this illustration. I'll just use it this way. It's like kissing your wife through a sheet. Let's call it that. You don't get the full effect of studying the Bible in English. You should be taught on the weekends, I hope, by someone who knows the original languages of the Bible. And so we're trying our best in church to try and didactically or explain as best we can, to expositor the meaning of the English text having understood the Greek text and knowing there is some betrayal that takes place. Even in this Q&A, I haven't gotten through the Q&A without quoting at least, you know, a few Greek words, because some of the Greek words, particularly compound words, express things in a much more vivid way. So you need someone teaching you as a mentor on Sundays at your church who knows the languages. And then you need to know that the reason we have all these different translations is because we're always trying to improve the moving target of English. That's our receptor language. And like you're standing next to our Spanish pastor, right? And there are two, I mean, there are more than two, but two major Spanish translations. And as Pastor Elvis talks to me about the old one, you know, it's like the King James in English because it's old Spanish. Right? And then there are the more modern Spanish translations, a few of which are popular, one in particular. So every receptor language has to change because language is evolving in the current usage. But it's snapshotted in the first century Greek and in Old Testament Hebrew, even though it evolved in Old Testament times because it was written over a thousand-year period. So we read it as literalists knowing that the original language is what's God-breathed, not the translation. And that's going to take a little bit of work. And that means that when you sit around in a small group and you read an English text of Scripture and you say, what does this mean to you? You need to not say that because it really doesn't matter what it means to you, it should matter what it really means, and what it really means needs to be deciphered sometimes through language. Sometimes language is helpful, sometimes it's not, sometimes it's not. Sometimes it's just as ambiguous in that language in terms of what exactly it means. It's got a breadth of meaning. All you got to do is pick up a Greek lexicon. Greek is a very precise language. But if you read a Greek lexicon just like an English lexicon... If you look up the English word "flush," how many usages in English do you have? Like 12? Okay. We use that word "flush" in a variety of ways. Same thing with Greek words, right? It was a living language in the New Testament, in Hebrew too. So, yes, we need to be careful being authoritative about an English word. I'm not trying to undermine your confidence in the English Bible because they're very carefully done. This isn't one person, like I'm holding an English Standard Version. Not only did a great team of modern scholars do the work in Hebrew and Greek to translate this, but this is like the sixth version of it because they went back under great scrutiny with all the public now reading it and all the seminary professors reading it, saying, well, this passage could be better, and this passage is not as accurate as it should be and this could be translated better. And so it's been revised like seven times or six times or whatever it's been. So, we are literalists in the sense that we... Here's a better way to put it.



We're translating the Bible normally, which means what is the author's intent? And there's a dual author in every passage of Scripture. Isaiah wrote Isaiah 53. But God, the Bible says, according to First Peter, was writing Isaiah 53, right? John was writing. Jesus is teaching in John 3 but it was also God who was writing that because God's Spirit was the one governing the writing of it. I would suggest you go to pastormike.com, go to how we got our Bible, and spend at least three hours on the first two lectures talking about the concept of theopneustos, God-breathed. And then we'll know that we're always talking about the original languages. And then the last two are on the translation, and that's like lectures 12 and 13. How do we get to this English text and why is it that the English text we use today may not be the one we're using 100 years from now, if we're serious about the text? Because translation is hard work and it's very nuanced work. Does that get to your question or do you want to toss out literalism? Because I don't. I want to say what does the text mean. And here's why I don't throw out literalism, if you want to call it that, I call it normal interpretation of Scripture, is because Jesus used it to make a point. He was using the literal reading of the text to say here is a nuance. Paul in Galatians says it's not from "seeds" that Christ would be born, it was from "seed." The word in Hebrew is singular. And that was speaking of Christ. Things like that are arguments made in Scripture about the tenses of verbs and the number of nouns. And when that's made then I'm thinking, okay, we should be very careful about this. Isaiah 40 says every word of God is eternal, eternally true. And therefore it's important. "Grass withers, flower fades, but the word of the God stands forever." So just because we have one step removed in a translation because we all speak English and our parents no longer make us learn Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Latin doesn't mean that we should toss out literalism. We should work harder and go to churches where your pastors work harder. Does that help? Or do you want more on that? Okay, good.

Question: As your children aged and came to Christ, how did you spur them on? And how did you change your teaching with them?

Pastor Mike: When they became Christians? Yeah. Well, first of all, I wanted to be careful that I didn't just accept the first move toward Christ in some overt way as, "Oh, that's for sure, your conversion." I didn't want to discourage it, but I didn't want to say, "Oh, I'm glad. Now your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life." I wanted to call them back to that. Hey, if you really became a Christian at this particular point I'm wondering about what you did here this week and how you feel about what you did this week. Because I know there's a new element of authority in his life if, in fact, he is a Christian or she is a Christian. Thankfully, all three of my kids are Christians. But they're coming to Christ at different ages in their maturation. I want to make sure that I'm calling into question that Christian confession based on what I'm seeing them do. And I think that's a good way for us just to test that and to call into question the fruit. Right? Because you'll know them by their fruits. And that's all I'm trying to do. You claim Christ, I want to know is the fruit in there? Once I'm convinced, which I think, and my kids would have to answer this like some of them have changed their testimony which needs to happen as you think honestly about your life. But once we got to a place where I think, okay, these are legitimate brothers in Christ and sister in Christ. I'm now going to talk to them with a much greater appeal to their obedience to God and not just the brokered obedience to God through me or mom. And I want to appeal to that like I would appeal to someone in the

church. Right? If you tell me you're cheating on your taxes every year I wouldn't say I told you not to. I wouldn't do that. I would say let's think as a brother in Christ is this pleasing to the Lord? I would talk to my kids a lot more like that after I was convinced they had real faith in Christ. What do you think this is doing to the Spirit of God in your life? Do you think this grieving the Spirit? There would be much greater deference to the ultimate authority. And praise God if your kid can come to faith in Christ while they're still in your home because you can train them in those last few years that you have to think the way you want them to think when you're not around. I want you to think about God and what God thinks of everything you're doing. I want you to think about what God thinks of your stewardship, your obedience, you know, your patterns, your liberties. Right? And I'm just constantly trying to push them to God's authority. But before that I want to say here's what's right. Obey your mom and dad. And you know the old line like, why? You don't have to... I don't need a why? God said I have the authority to tell you when to go to bed. So go to bed when I tell you to. And there's nothing wrong with that when they're young and I think parents aren't dutiful enough in seeing that they have God's imprimatur, God's authority granted to you to tell your kids to do what they're supposed to do. That's a really one-dimensional answer. Those are several things that have changed. I never let my kids pray, for instance, for meals, right? I see that all the time. Little toddler learns to mouth some words because they heard mom and dad giving a blessing over the meal or whatever. And oh, junior, you pray. And I think it's cute, especially when the pastor's over. I don't think it's cute. Right? Number one, I don't think your kid's a Christian, probably if he's three years old, and I want to teach my kids to pray. I did not ask any of my kids to pray in front of people, like at a meal or something, until I was convinced that they were Christians. And then I would say, hey, would you like to lead in prayer? I didn't do it all the time. I really wanted them to learn how dad prayed in situations and so I made it my pattern to lead in prayer. Of course, mom prayed with him a ton because she was with him alone more often. That's two things now I'm saying. But deference to God's authority. More responsibility to do things like pray in front of people because I think they're real Christians. There's probably more to that but we're over time. Does that give you something to chew on a little bit? All right.

Pastor Mike: Let's stand up because we're out of time. It's hard to believe that went by so fast, but hopefully that was helpful. Let's pray. God, thanks for our special weekend we have every year where we talk about whatever is on the minds of our congregants. We're thankful, God, for these great questions, for the church that's so inquisitive and just really good questions that get us thinking deeply about your truth. We want to be better students of the Word. We even think about the softening of our culture, our Christian subculture, regarding that discussion about languages. We just need to work harder. We need to be rightly handling the word of truth. "A workman doesn't need to be ashamed." That's what we want to be. So God make us all better with the capacities that we have. I know that accountants and moms and plumbers and welders, you know, whatever we have here, professionals they don't have time maybe to take every class at the Compass Bible Institute. They don't have time to learn the languages. But, I do pray we would take whatever we have in front of us and be good students of the Word. Let us get in the Word more even as we started this conversation about reading your Word to build our faith, make us strong Christians as we hold tightly to the Word of truth. Thanks that your "Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path."



In Jesus name. Amen.