



Ask Pastor Mike Live 2026 – Part 3

Pastor Mike Fabarez

Pastor Mike: Well, welcome to our annual question and answer service. And if you have a question about the Bible, Christian life, theology, whatever it might be, some dilemma you're facing well this is for you. We have people with microphones right here. And just wave them down and we'll try to tackle whatever is on your mind. So just get their attention because they'll be lonely if you don't, they'll just stand there like a post. All right. We'll start right here. And while there's a question going on here just wave them down. Look how lonely they look. All right, go ahead and stand up if you don't mind. And then they'll hold the microphone for you just because they know the distance there.

Question: So I was looking for the Scripture, but it was a Scripture about false teachers coming and they'll try to deceive people and even if possible, the elect. So are the elect even possible to be deceived?

Pastor Mike: Well, that's the point. He says if it were possible which it's not. And that's what the point is in that text. And it's regarding Matthew Chapter 24, regarding the tribulational period and over against in Second Thessalonians Chapter 2, when it talks about the power of the enemy working through the man of lawlessness. And it's so persuasive, the wonders and, you know, signs that he's doing. And there's such a delusion in the world but there are people being saved during that tribulation period, according to my theology at least, which is not mine exclusively, but many others. It's so persuasive that I think Jesus makes that statement about the same period of time, the Time of Jacob's Trouble, 70-week of Daniel in Matthew 24 that it's amazing that not everyone is deceived, but many are. Yeah. So you can correlate Matthew Chapter 24 with Second Thessalonians Chapter 2 to tie that together. So he's just making a statement that if it were possible, but it's not. Yeah.

Question: Question for Christian parents. I know in your book you talk about how we need to model Bible reading and praying in our homes. But should we have our non-Christian children, my three-year-old, pray like when she wants to pray at dinner, or if she wants to pray randomly on her own? Should we be encouraging that? Should we have them pray or do we simply model prayer until they are Christians?

Pastor Mike: Well, "should" is a big word because I'm not going to engage in a "should" answer. But if you want to ask me what I did, I did not encourage them to pray to lead others in prayer. Of course, all the time I said, you know, you should talk to God about that. I said that a lot, but yeah, no, I'm not going to... You know, it's cute for most people to have their three-year-old or four-year-old, you know, lead in prayer at the dinner table. I didn't think that was cute. So I know you think I don't think anything is cute. (audience laughing) I do think some things are cute, but yeah... I'm not going to encourage my kid to lead in prayer if they're not Christians. I will let them lead now in prayer but they're grown up. But I would model it for them, but I would talk, you know, I would tell them all the time, you know, talk to God about that. I don't mind my non-Christian kid praying to God. I'm just not going to have them lead us in prayer. Yeah, that's what I did. A "should" is too strong of an answer though for that. Yeah.



Question: My question is about our Triune God. We know that they share or have the same attributes, and they live or coexist in perfect harmony and agreement. However, there seems to be a hierarchy, God the Father being the dominant one, and then Jesus, the second person of the Godhead, and then in third place, the Holy Spirit. Seems like Jesus always does the Father's will not acting on his own accord. Likewise, when Jesus was talking to the disciples about sending the Comforter, to my understanding the Comforter was to do the will of Jesus or to take his place while Jesus was not with us in bodily form. So is this hierarchy or apparent hierarchy just from our human understanding, not being able to understand God of course? Or is there in fact other than in matters that relate to the creation is there in fact a hierarchy?

Pastor Mike: Yeah. The language that you used we would say is very imprecise. We wouldn't use the language. The language we would want to use regarding the Triune God is the word co-equal. The uniqueness of how people fall into that language comes to his time of the incarnation. And during the incarnation clearly, which is this period of time between what is described in Philippians Chapter 2 of what's called the gnosis of him "being found in the human form," the emptying, which is not his losing his divinity, but clearly limiting his exercise of his divine attributes all the way to what he describes in John Chapter 17, saying, I'm going to restore the glory that I had before the "foundation of the world" with you, that period of time, the glorification after the resurrection and the incarnation. This is a time where we have all these hints that it looks like, oh, he seems so subordinate and so less than that we are tempted not to use the word "co-equal," but we must use the word co-equal because that's how he's described in Hebrews Chapter 1, Colossians Chapter 2. I mean, he is the exact representation of the nature of God, to quote Hebrews Chapter 1 verse 3. So, no, I wouldn't use the language that you used. And even regarding the Spirit. Yeah. In the Upper Room Discourse the way it's described, there is a sense in which he says, "I will not leave you as orphans." I'm sending the Spirit. In that sense, it looks like, oh, you know, he seems like the third tier. That's not the way we should view the Triune God. All persons of the Godhead are co-equal. And because of that we're not going to describe it that way. The incarnation is the uniqueness of Christ living as our humbled Redeemer, taking on all the attributes of humanity which put him in a very unique situation so he could redeem us. And after that, and we reread John Chapter 17, he was going to be restored to full exercise of his divinity in a sense that he was going to exercise all the divine attributes in a way that no one would confuse the fact that he is co-equal with the Father and the Spirit. One taste of that in his earthly ministry was the Mount of Transfiguration. So, no, I would not prefer the language that you used. So go wash your mouth out with soap. (audience laughing) No. Yeah, just kidding of course. We're friends so I can say that.

Question: I just want to thank you publicly for doing these Q&A's, because I'm from New Jersey in church since I was a baby and we never did anything like this. But I know that you're well equipped because I come to all of these. I listen to all three of them. And when you speak to the women's ministry, I'm there as well. So I just wanted to thank you. I also listened last night and I heard a young woman in the audience ask the question about voting and your response, and I, knowing we've had many patio conversations about voting, just wanted to



commend you on how you handled that, because I think all of us here need encouragement to know that we're responsible to vote. And you stated your philosophy on voting and I was totally moved by it. But anyway, I'd like you to share that, that's number one. Number two is a question. A friend has a mom, a senior mom, who comes to church here and is engaged in other ministries. She's in her golden years. And her daughter doesn't know if the mom is really saved because there are many things she does that don't follow that pattern. And one of them is watching CNN on a regular basis, like really all day. How would you address that? Or how should the daughter address that with, you know, in trying to inspire her mom that that is not a station to listen to? (audience clapping and laughing) Thank you.

Pastor Mike: I thought CNN stood for the Christian News Network. That's not what it is? Well, to respond to the first part of your statement, all I said last night was, though the Scripture does not address the issue of voting because there was no voting, obviously, under the Roman Empire and in the Old Testament, it was a set of instructions for a nation where there was no voting. I certainly can extrapolate from the principles of Scripture if Christians have an opportunity to have a say in the government officials who are installed to do what Romans Chapter 13 says they're there to do, of course we ought to take advantage of that responsibility, and all of you should register to vote and should vote and you should vote intelligently. And that's the gist of what I said last night. As far as what channel people listen to. This is a matter of wisdom, and I don't think I would question someone's salvation based on what channel news they're listening to. Yeah, the concern of what we imbibe and how we get our news, I get why someone is going to be concerned about that, I understand. But, you know, here's how I would probably respond. There are probably bigger fish to fry when it comes to someone's sanctification. And if this is the last issue of sanctification for them, I think mom's probably in decent shape because when I deal with people's discipleship, there are a lot of things before I get to what kind of news do you listen to? So, yeah, I don't know. I might say, hey, you know, is this the best place to get your news? I don't know. I'm not going to spend a lot of time trying to debate all that. Anyone should say you should get your news from a variety of sources. And I think that's the wisest thing to do. That's all I'm going to say about that.

Question: So I was sitting here thinking, I have two questions. And is it greedy to ask both but because of the sweet lady who went just before me, I'm going to do two (audience laughing) if that's OK. So number one, you clearly love God's Word. I was wondering if you can tell us a little bit about your love relationship with God's Word, kind of like with your wife, like when you first fell in love with the Word and how you continue to love it and how you stoked that love. So yeah, like the beginning when you were like, oh my gosh, this is real and I love it so much. So if you can tell us a little bit about that. And my second is very different. A dear friend of mine called me yesterday, she was crying and she told me that her daughter is quote engaged to a woman and the marriage, quote-unquote marriage is now set. She's not sure what to do. So if such a person went into your office and said do we go to the "wedding"? What would you say?

Pastor Mike: Okay, let me answer the second question first. Yeah. I wouldn't go to anything that is positing itself as a wedding if in fact it's not a wedding. Wedding is the territory of a God



institution. Right? God designed marriage, it's clear in Scripture. This is how Genesis Chapter 2 describes it. This is an institution created by God. Man and woman come together. And then Moses comments on it in the text, which of course is God's Spirit commenting on it. For this reason "a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." So this is how it's described. And Jesus repeats this in the New Testament, "God made them male and female." and they're to be joined together in marriage. And "what therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." So if anything is going to destroy that paradigm and say, well, this is a marriage, I'm going to say, no, I'm not going to participate in that, because it is, even as the license that's pulled from the county clerk in Orange County, it says solemnized, to solemnize this relationship. You're not solemnizing the relationship that, I mean, even that language that is an institution that you say you're solemnizing, you can't solemnize this. So I'm not going to be a part of that, even if it's my child. I'm going to say you know I am a Christian. I am devoted first and foremost to Christ. And whether I'm quoting Luke Chapter 14 or a ton of other passages, Matthew Chapter 10, I know from the day I became a Christian, sometimes my commitment to Christ is going to get in the way of my relationship with my kids, and my relationship with my parents, my relationship with myself, to quote Luke Chapter 14 verse 26, that's what it says. So I'm going to say I can't be there because you're not getting married, right? You're doing something that the culture says is marriage but it's not. I can't stand up for it. I'm so sorry. I'm doing that because I love God more than I love you. And then she'll have a fit and that's exactly what Christ said in Matthew Chapter 10 verse 34. I came to bring a sword. Don't think I came to bring peace; I came to bring division. That is part of the stripes and the scars that we're going to bear as being followers of Christ. Now, in our Orange County world where we all want, you know, to shop at the Spectrum Mall and have everything our way, and it's not supposed to cost us anything, that doesn't compute with some of you, I'm sure. But that's how Christianity works. That's what I would tell her and I would say I'm really sorry, and I'd hand her a box of Kleenex, and it would be a really difficult conversation. And I would say there are plenty of other ways that you can try and keep the bridge built with your daughter, and I hope that she would. But there are a lot of homosexuals in our culture and they are very angry people and no matter what, if you toy with that which is at the heart of their campaign, they don't want anything to do with you. And what can I do? Right? There are a lot of things that people reject in my life, even the core things they rejected in my life, it doesn't mean that I cease to be friendly with my neighbors because they don't like my Christianity or whatever it is that may be the core issue in my life. But it doesn't work both ways when it comes to a lot of the LGBTQ community. So that's all I can do, right? "So far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." Sometimes it doesn't depend on me, so that's a hard one. Peter talked about the relationship with God's Word that I think we all have, like newborn babies we long and crave for the, which depends on the translation, but clearly in view as the pure milk of the Word. That's the context. And because we're born again by this living Word, and therefore we want the oracles of God, we want the revelation of God, we want God's Word which is an inborn, natural thing. And as John Chapter 1 says, we "who were born, not ... of the will of flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." And when God gets a hold of your heart we should all crave God's Word like a baby's craving milk. And so that happened for me when I was 18 years old. I was sent off, and this is maybe why I became a fat baby in Christ; I was sent off to Bible school when I was 17 years old and became a Christian there. I was sent off in August, I



became a Christian in October, and I was enrolled as a Bible student because I didn't plan to stay and matriculate through the program. And so I became a Christian in the middle of my first semester studying Bible and theology. So when I went from I hate being here to I love this I had it all day long and I ate it up, and I fell in love with learning about God's Word. Now, I grew up in church. I was the president of my youth group. I memorized all kinds of verses so I could earn the leather football prize, you know, all the things they did to try and induce you to learn the Bible. So I learned a lot of Bible as a kid, but I fell in love with the Bible when God regenerated my heart. So it was a natural thing. And I think Christian radio, it's not ironic, it's providential that I'm involved in Christian radio. Christian radio played a big role in this because when I wasn't in class or I wasn't in the library studying, I was in my dorm room with the Christian radio on. And Moody Radio is celebrating 100 years this year of broadcasting, one of the first Christian radio stations in the country. And I had it on all the time, and most of it was Christian teaching and talk. And I ate it up. One of the things I talked about last night, if you happen to listen to that, is I listened to Don Cole, who did a Bible answer program, and I just loved it. Everyone had a question about God, about the Bible, about the Christian life. And I just loved that the Bible, as the Bible itself says, has everything pertaining to life and godliness. It's there, and I just wanted to know enough of it to be able to know not only for myself, but eventually the more I loved God, the more I loved his people. I wanted to be able to broker God's Word to help whoever it was that had whatever problem they had. I didn't want to make decisions or say things if I couldn't find a biblical basis for it which just made me hungrier, I think, for God's Word. So I think it's a supernatural desire you have if you're a real Christian and then you build on it I think as God gives you opportunity, and then I think the more you love God's people, if you just happen to have a, you know, a penchant for it, you just dig into it deeper. You know what that's like. So that's my story. I'm sticking to it.

Question: I just had a question about if there are different levels in heaven.

Pastor Mike: Well, not the way that some teach it. There are cult groups that talk about three different heavens because in Second Corinthians Chapter 12, Paul says I "was caught up to the third heaven." And I've explained this many times recently in the study of Second Corinthians Chapter 12. Some of you were here for just a few weeks back. He calls it the third heaven, because the word "heaven" in that text is the word that both talks about the sky and space and the throne room of God. So where God lives, where the planets live and where the birds fly. And because of that he calls it the third heaven. Some people have said, oh, okay, there are like three neighborhoods in the eternal home. That's not the case. Okay. You and I, if we're Christians, aren't going to live in heaven. We're going to take a brief stay there in the intermediate state because we're going to go to be with Christ, be "absent in body, I am present in spirit," Second Corinthians 5 but when that's done, we're going get our bodies back and we're going to come and inhabit "a new earth in which righteousness dwells," Second Peter Chapter 3 verse 13. So in that new earth, that's where I'm going to live and all Christians are going to live and God is going to dwell in heaven, the Father is, at least, going to dwell in heaven. The Son is going to rule and reign on earth. And I am going to have a different experience than other people and it's all going to be based on God's blessing and rewards, which will vary based on faithfulness, based on what opportunities we had, based on motives, based on whatever else. It doesn't mean that pastors and missionaries are going to



be the most blessed, because it doesn't matter where you work or what you do, you know, you have to do with whatever God's given you to be faithful in it as a good steward. And it may be people who you've never heard of who are the most blessed in the kingdom. But yeah, everyone's going to have a different experience, not every single last person. We're going to have different experiences on the new earth. But we're not going to live in heaven for long if you follow that. Does that answer your question? Okay. Yeah. There are no bad experiences in the New Earth, but there will certainly be more blessing, more reward is the word Jesus uses in the kingdom. Yeah.

Question: So the woman who asked a question, I think three people before me, raised another question for me. And it was how do we discern the salvation of somebody I'm dating? And people are saying, oh, I've been saved for as long as I can remember. I know I wasn't born a Christian but I've been saved as long as I can remember. So how do we discern their salvation? And then the question I initially wanted to ask was someone was telling me there was a difference between baptism of the Holy Spirit when you are saved and being baptized in the Holy Spirit relating it to gifts such as healing and tongues, which the latter he claimed to have the gift of. And I was wondering what your stance on that is and what that could possibly have meant when he was referring to the difference of baptism of the Holy Spirit in two different ways.

Pastor Mike: All right, let's talk about the first one first. The most important thing for anyone, and Jesus was dealing with this all the time, like are you a Christ-follower now? Clearly that's the most important thing. So when I meet someone, I get to know them, of course I'm wanting to know are you a Christ-follower now? And in our Church age are you a converted person? Do you have a new heart? Do you have a new, you know, direction in your heart? Do you have new core desires to follow Christ? Has Christ forgiven you? Are you regenerate? Of course I want to know the now. Okay then it'd be good to know the history and that's called our testimony. I'd like to know when that started because you weren't born that way. So you have that already. Now when he says, I don't know when that started. Okay, that bothers me a little bit because the Bible's pretty clear, this is a pretty big redirection of your life, because we're all born living for ourselves and Christianity reorients that, Second Corinthians 5:15 to "no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." So it's going to be a pretty dramatic distinction. Now, I just told my story about becoming a Christian at 18, but I also told my story that I grew up in church, and at least I wasn't corrupt enough for them to exclude me from being the president of my youth group. So I wasn't a drug dealer. I had no sordid testimony. So no one could look at the exterior of my life and go, oh, he sure cleaned up his act. He's a good Christian now. They thought I was a good Christian when I was 15. Right? So what happened? The interior of my life changed and everyone started to see a new direction, including my love for God's Word, including I don't want to do what I was going to do in high school, which wasn't to be a drug dealer, it was to be a musician, which no one thought was a bad thing. And now I want to just study God's Word and I don't know what I want to do. I'll do whatever God wants me to do. That was weird to people and that was a different direction. I wanted to do whatever God wants me to do, and that's where I came up with saying anything, any place, any time, I'll do whatever God wants me to do. So that should be a dramatic enough distinction to kind of know when that started, because I doubt when he



thinks back to being eight years old, he's thinking, that's what I was, anything God wants me to do, I'll do whatever. Or as a 12-year-old or as a 15-year-old? Okay. So here's what I would do to someone like that. I want you to really study soteriology. I want you to study what it means to become a Christian. I wrote a little book called *Getting It Right*. It would be good for you to just pore through that book. What does it mean? What does biblical faith mean? What does biblical repentance mean? What does conversion mean? What does regeneration mean? What are the works that follow? We need to understand the gospel. And I just talked about the chapters that talk about the response to the gospel, because that would be the part that would be really telling for him. But I think the more you study and it's not like urgent it has to happen today, but the more you study that, the more you have to look at your own life in light of those truths from Scripture. And I think some of this will get into sharper focus. And I'll bet a year from now, if he takes the next year to say the doctrine I want to study most is what the Bible has to say about becoming a Christian, being saved. Soteriology. I think in a year he's going to know when he became a Christian. So I'm not panicked, I'm not thinking you're not a Christian if you show signs of being a Christian. But let's make this our number one priority. Okay. The word "Baptizō" means "to be placed into." The Bible is really clear that when we become Christians we get, and I'm going to say this even though they don't agree with this, we get all of the Spirit completely given to us. We're sealed with the Spirit. We're given the Spirit. We have the Spirit indwelling us from the moment of our conversion. In other words, Romans Chapter 8 verse 9 puts it this way, if you do not have the Spirit of God in you, you are not a Son of God. So I get the Spirit of God. He is in me, right? And I am therefore in Christ if I have the Spirit of God in me. Okay. The problem Pentecostals and Charismatics sometimes talk about a second blessing of being baptized in the Spirit is they read the book of Acts and they say, oh, look what happened here in Asia, or look what happened here where we see this delayed engagement of the Spirit with people when the Jews showed up and they wanted to know whether these Gentiles in Asia really saved in Philippi. Well, there had to be some like confirmation as people were wondering did they get the same Spirit that we received. And so God had given this miraculous sign in Acts Chapter 2, which was repeated twice in Acts Chapter 10, and then later in the book of Acts, as the gospel came to Philippi. And the picture of those three markers, like Jesus said in Acts Chapter 1 in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, ends the earth. This was marked by some miraculous sign, and that miraculous sign was the gift, what I understand in Scripture, of the gift of languages which then the Jews could verify. Okay, these people have a gift here that's a sign. It's not just an ecstatic utterance. It's a sign that was clearly discernible. And it proved to everyone, yeah, what happened in Pentecost with the Jews here is happening to the Roman in Acts Chapter 10 and the Asian at the end of the book of Acts. So this is all the same thing. They're all included. Jew, Gentile everyone is a part of this, Scythian, slave, free, barbarian. They're all a part of the body of Christ. Same Spirit, same thing. Okay, well, that delay of that thing, they say, oh, they were baptized in the Spirit and the gift of the languages came. This is where Pentecostals, they're not the only ones, but groups like them who say that's what you need. You need the second endowment of the Spirit. You may become a Christian but now you need to be baptized in the Spirit later. And the way, like the Foursquare Church or some, you know, United Pentecostals will put it, you can't worship, work or witness effectively until you get the second blessing and be baptized in the Spirit. And what I've often said is what else is there, right? Witness, work and worship, that's like the gist of the Christian life. And



they say, well, you have to have that. And the evidence of that sign is you speaking in tongues, which they define as an ecstatic utterance. Right? Which is not what I understand the gift of languages to be in the book of Acts. So that's what they're wanting everyone to do, which I think contradicts what is said in the book of First Corinthians that not everyone's going to do that, which, of course is the goal of everyone in the Pentecostal church. Everyone should do that. So I think we look at the rest of normative Christianity and the letters of Paul and elsewhere in the New Testament, and we find that when you become a Christian we're not in the book of Acts where we're trying to prove to the Jews that all the Gentiles are being saved the same way we are. Everyone becomes a Christian. They get all of the Holy Spirit they're going to get. It doesn't mean we please them in the same way at the beginning of the Christian life as we do later, there's no miraculous sign with some second blessing that comes, we're "sealed," Ephesians Chapter 4 verse 30, with the Spirit, "for the day of redemption," for our inheritance, the minute we become a Christian. If you don't have the Spirit you're not a Christian. And that happens at the moment of your conversion. If you want more on this go to pastormike.com or focalpointministries.org/study-the-bible/focal-point-u/ and look at the study on the Holy Spirit. And you can look at the lecture on the baptism of the Holy Spirit I think it's called. And I'll explain it for 90 minutes. But there are nine minutes on it or whatever I spent. Yeah.

Question: I have two questions. When we die do we go to heaven right away? And the second question is how do we know that the dreams that we have are from God?

Pastor Mike: Okay. Great questions. When someone close to us dies today we often say they "passed away." That's our euphemism. It's a nice way. We don't like to say, hey, my wife died, so we say she "passed away." We say it in soft tones. It's a nice way of saying it. The euphemism in biblical times was "sleep," right? And sleep we still use it in some contexts like when the president dies or someone in the presidential cabinet and their body lies "in repose" in the rotunda. Repose means "sleep." Right? Well, the body certainly looks like it's sleeping. But we know what's happened is their spirit has left the body and the body is just lying there. So sleep as a euphemism has turned into people reading the ancient text of the Bible and saying, oh, I guess what's happening is their spirit is kind of doing nothing, and the body is just lying there and the spirit's just kind of flatlined and so I guess there's no consciousness, nothing going on. That's all based on this euphemism and a reading of the Old Testament, especially early Old Testament, where there's not a lot of revelation yet of the afterlife and they're thinking, oh, that's what's going on. There's no conscious awareness. Keep reading. And as God continues to unfold his revelation, by the time we get to the New Testament, it's really clear, Jesus is telling stories about when they die. The rich man and Lazarus die, and they get carried away instantly. Paul says, Second Corinthians Chapter 5. I've already quoted to be "absent in body, I am present in spirit. Okay. Paul says in Philippians Chapter 1, I don't know which to choose, "to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor," but "to die is gain." Well, "My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better." Everyone in the New Testament clearly knows that the minute we die, our spirit leaves the body. Actually, it's already stated back in the book of Genesis. Rachel dies and her spirit leaves her body. Jesus on the cross. He says, "today you'll be with me in paradise." That guy's spirit is about to leave his body. Jesus first is going to say, "into your hands I commit my spirit!" His spirit's going to



leave his body. He's going to be consciously somewhere. He's going to be with the Father. The thief on the cross is going to be up with Christ. So yes, we may look like... our bodies look like... because my body is going to look like me. I'm just animating this body. When I die my body ain't going to move around much. It may twitch a little bit. That's gross, but I'm going to be gone. And where am I going to be? According to Christ's teaching in the New Testament, I'm going to be consciously aware as my spirit disembodied, as Paul put it, naked, wanting desperately to have my eternal body which he calls a building. Our body now is called a tent because it's going to pass away, but I want to be re-clothed in the building. So I'm awaiting the resurrection. That's called the disembodied state, and we're going to be disembodied for a while. It's called the intermediate state and I'm going to be conscious and aware in the presence of Christ. So that's what happens when we die. Our spirit leaves the body. Our body should be set aside, respectfully awaiting the resurrection, it is going to be remade, it is going to be eternally healthy and alive and energetic and made glorious like Christ's body, impervious to death or disease. That is what happens when we die. That was your question, right? Your first question. Dreams. Yeah. What can I say? In the Scriptures one of the ways we have God communicating occasionally is by a dream, a vision, an angel showing up. Lots of different ways. As Hebrews Chapter 1 says, "In many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he's spoken to us by his Son." So even as the book of Jude says, "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints." I don't think God is in the business of giving you or me or anybody else divine revelation through our dreams. My dreams, probably like most of your dreams, are just my mind idling on who knows what, weird stuff getting chased by, you know, plumbers or who knows what, you know, bowling and... For my dreams it's Sunday and I forgot to prepare a sermon. And, you know, that's the kind of thing. So, yeah, I don't expect any of my dreams to be from God. That doesn't mean that when I wake up from something, especially if I'm panicked about something, I don't go, oh, you know, God, I better make sure I prepare for a sermon on Sunday. I mean, I'm just not like I'm dead to whatever the dream is about, but I'm not going to be like this is God speaking to me. Even Paul, when in the day when we didn't have the New Testament written and the Macedonian Call comes to him and the Macedonian Call is to come over to Greece, come and help us. I love the way it ends. It says. And so "concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them." I think, well, duh. Right? Even that it's almost like he's not fully trusting the vision alone. It's like he has to process this. Is this even wise? Is this even right? Now I know that played a big part in it, and if not, you know, the almost whole of it, but it's almost like he had to conclude this was the right thing. I just think that's a bigger word than most people give it credit for. So don't put too much into your dreams or your feelings, right? Put all of your confidence in what God has clearly said, because my feelings and my dreams don't always comport with this book. So this is the sure Word of God and that's where we want to be. Does that help?

Question: A quick question. In terms of lordship salvation, I've always in my head thought that we become a Christian when we don't just become saved with Jesus as our Lord and Savior, as it's frequently in Scripture in that order, Lord and Savior. So, in my understanding that usually means there needs to be some repentance. We repent and confess and then God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. There was a teacher who I followed a lot, especially when I was a new Christian, I would follow "Thru the Bible" with J. Vernon McGee



and I stumbled across when I was looking up stuff on the Internet about Lordship Salvation and I found that J. Vernon McGee, who I had a lot of respect for, didn't embrace Lordship Salvation, at least in one speech I saw him giving, he rejected it. And the way I hear most people who are on the Lordship Salvation side will say they refer to the option as easy believism or cheap grace. I would be interested in hearing the other view. I mean, the only thing I can imagine, with someone like J. Vernon McGee is that they're thinking you become saved by believing with your whole heart that Jesus died for you and his sacrifice is sufficient. And then the first act of a saved heart is to repent. I'm trying to figure out how someone I would respect would not... And then to have someone say you don't really know an argument until you have people that believe each side explain each side.

Pastor Mike: Well, let me try to explain why I think a lot of people have responded poorly, particularly back in J. Vernon McGee's day, to the language. If you go way back to Burnt-over District in upstate New York, and the rise of a lot of the cult groups and the sweeping of cult groups across America, you know, 150 years ago, there was such a popularity of Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Christian Science and some of the Adventists, everything else. There was this huge sweep across evangelical churches of temptation to be drawn into cult groups and even Roman Catholicism that was drawing you to say, do this, do this, do this. You have to do this, and then you can be saved. The works-based salvation model was something that evangelical churches were fighting hard against, and therefore they were saying, hey, this is about grace, this is about grace, this is about grace. I grew up in a church like that. I think they understood the gospel, but they were very hyper about good works because they did not want to compromise the gospel. Why? Because every other week they were battling the cults and we had classes on it, we had all that stuff. So I think that created a hypersensitivity. And anytime someone wanted to talk about obedience, good works, repentance, Lord, you know, they didn't like that and they responded negatively to it. And sometimes people would say in trying to justify a works-based salvation, well, he's the Lord, you have to obey him. And that shift, which is a bit subtle, all of a sudden changed the argument. And some people often went out there under the banner of Lordship Salvation and said, that's wrong. Okay. But here's what J. Vernon McGee would never dismiss. Okay. And I'll give you plenty of examples. Here's the first one, James Chapter 2 verse 14, "if someone says he has faith but does not have works, can that faith save him?" Or how about Matthew Chapter 7 verses 22 and 23? "Many will say to me on the day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not...?'" "And I'll declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness,'" right? Or Matthew Chapter 7 verse 16, "You'll know them by their fruits." I mean, I could go on and on all day, right? It is about the reality of your good works following. Ephesians Chapter 2 verse 10. It's everywhere in Scripture. Now you cannot be saved if you don't have the evidence of that salvation. Even if you're the thief on the cross and you only have a few hours to live he's still rebuking the other thief. Right? There's some fruit in this. He didn't get baptized. He didn't give money. He didn't do anything in church. Right? But still his heart was changed and a changed heart is going to do good things. Not without fail, not without stumbling. "We all stumble in many things," but that is something every Bible teacher is going to agree on. But what they did is they wanted to make sure you didn't misunderstand. Let's put it this way. And I think I used this last night so if you've heard all these this weekend, I apologize for the redundancy. When Paul has Timothy circumcised. Right? Paul has no problem with that. Right? Timothy's dad was a Greek.



Timothy didn't get circumcised. Paul thought it'd be important because he says to the Corinthians Jews if they're under the law, I'm going to be under the law. But, you know, I'm not under the law, I'm under the law of Christ. Right? So he knows he's not under the law. He's not trusting in that. But he can do that for the sake of his mission. Well, then to the Galatians, he says, if you let yourself be circumcised then Christ is of no value to you. What's the difference? These guys are getting their foreskins cut off and he's saying you're going to hell. He's having Timothy get his foreskin cut off and it's like, oh no, that's cool. What's the difference? The difference is where your trust is. Good works need to be emphasized, right? You have to tell people, repent, and as Paul said, prove your repentance by your deeds. Now that makes a lot of people very uncomfortable if you're in an environment where everyone is trying to tell you to do good deeds to be saved. So a lot of people will argue against that. That's why in the Partners Manual, if you've been through Partners, I created that equation and I said the GOSPEL + the RIGHT RESPONSE = SALVATION. That's what I grew up under. And then I said, oh, but the cults said the GOSPEL + the RIGHT RESPONSE, + GOOD WORKS = SALVATION. That's what they were fighting. That's why they took GOOD WORKS from the middle of the equation and threw it away. I said, oh, but then I read the Bible. It was the GOSPEL + the RIGHT RESPONSE = SALVATION + GOOD WORKS. Now that's the only equation that adds up scripturally. If you take GOOD WORKS out of the equation and after SALVATION, neither of the previous equations work. So I know J. Vernon McGee agreed with the last equation, but a lot of people were just battling the first two equations, and that's where I think we've missed the point. Now, what I like about pastoring in Southern California, is that most people are theologically, at least the non-Christians, ignorant of all that controversy. So we can just preach the Bible and pretty much just preach the Bible. They are new Christians, they learn about it, they're like, oh, okay. So in the olden days, even in Southern California, it was different. Does that kind of help? Okay.

Question: My question has to do with John Chapter 20 verse 23, when Jesus appeared to the disciples and told them, "if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them." But if you don't forgive them, then their sins would not be forgiven." And somebody approached me, a Catholic, and said this is the reason why they confess to a priest for their sins, because the priest has to absolve them of their sin. Can you explain that to me and how to give them a good answer?

Pastor Mike: Well, this is not their best verse that they're going to quote. But yeah. Number one, I mean, we can deal with the foundational issue of First Timothy Chapter 2 verse 5, "There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." He is our advocate. He's the mediator. The man does not mediate the grace of God. Their whole theology is built on the fact that the church is the mediating institution. They are the broker of the merits of the grace of Christ, and they broker it through the seven sacraments. The Catholic church says penance involves confession to the priest as part of the brokerage of the grace of Christ. It's not in Scripture. It's a lie. It is not the truth. Okay. The passage is certainly true. And it's true like First John Chapters 2 and 3 and 4 are true, which is if you don't love you're not a Christian, right? If you don't forgive you're not a Christian. That's the broader way to say it, right? You have to prove that you're a Christian by your deeds. I just quoted that from James Chapter 2. It doesn't make you a Christian, but the litmus test of your Christianity is a changed



heart and a changed heart knows this, right? I've been forgiven; I need to forgive. God has loved me; therefore I need to love my brother. These are the fundamentals of the Christian life. And therefore it can be said as starkly as it is said here, if you don't forgive then God doesn't forgive. Now, it's such a strong statement because Jesus isn't a milquetoast teacher. He is a shock teacher, right? He throws it in your face. "If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out," right? That's a pastor if he's candidating in your church to be your pastor you probably don't want that guy in the pulpit, right? This is shock sermons. And yet that's how Jesus taught. And here's a way to put it that's very strong. And I get it. But it's just like me saying the proof of your Christianity is if you have a changed heart and a changed heart is going to forgive. And if you don't forgive then you're not forgiven. And if you don't love then you're not loved by God, not the way you think you are. You're not a covenant child of God. These are foundational expressions. "You'll recognize them by their fruits." It's as basic as that statement which most of us would nod to, but we struggle with this one. The church is not involved in this, right? All the passages about "the keys of the kingdom," you have the keys. Those are the best verses. And those verses are there saying, okay, you have, and we think about these in terms of the apostles, you have this quote-unquote authority, which the Catholic church is saying is inherent in the people. And we're saying, no, it's not inherent in the people, right? It's inherent in the truth. And anything I say if it's in line with the truth then you better guarantee it's authoritative. It's authoritative not because I said it. I'm a man. I'm just a person. But if I say it and it's true, then it's true. And you'll stand before God and give an account for it. And that's all those passages and we can get into those another time. But that's where they try to build their case and they give themselves authority that they don't have, and they base it on just a few passages. There's no apostolic succession, even if you want to say Peter's the rock, Jesus built the church on Peter, he's the quarterback, he's the senior pastor of the first mega church in Acts Chapter 2 and Acts Chapter 4. Okay, great. There's no apostolic succession in the Bible. We don't have a pope. All right.

Question: My question is about forgiveness and boundaries with family members who are verbally abusive. And then the next day, they love you, and then it goes back and forth. I'm trying to decipher if I'm forgiving or accepting the behavior. I'm still loving them, still being around them. And then I don't know if that's forgiveness or if it's just acceptance of the behavior. Also with boundaries, having boundaries with certain family members I've been told that I'm righteous. You know, you're so righteous to have these boundaries with us.

Pastor Mike: Mockingly they say that.

Question: Yes. That I should check and question my Christianity because of the verbally abusive behavior I want boundaries. Is that a sin to have boundaries?

Pastor Mike: Okay. Let's do the whole sentence over without the word "abuse" and without the word "boundaries," say it again. So they're mean to you with their words. And so therefore you do what? You say I'm not going to be with you. You can't come over.

Question: No, I don't say that.



Pastor Mike: Okay, tell me what you say. Do they say things to you that are vulgar? They say mean things to you? What do they say?

Question: Yes. Mean things. Vulgar things. And then the next day they're acting normal.

Pastor Mike: Okay. And then what are the boundaries? What do you do? Don't use the word boundaries. What are the lines you draw quote-unquote?

Question: To be honest, during that time I don't really draw the boundaries until later on. I talk to my husband and tell him I don't want to be around them alone or without my husband.

Pastor Mike: And then they know that they're not allowed to be with you alone. And then they say, oh, you're so self-righteous, and they mock you.

Question: Yes, one of them has done that, and the other one does not know that I want boundaries because I haven't told them.

Pastor Mike: Okay. So you're afraid they'll have the same response?

Question: Yes. I have evangelized to them in the past, but because of the anger, I stopped.

Pastor Mike: These are family members, you say?

Question: They're family members. So I just don't know if I'm trying to figure out am I forgiving these people or am I accepting their actions? I don't know if it's...

Pastor Mike: I'm not real keen on all the vocabulary because I could look at Jesus who says, how long must they put up with you? Was he accepting of the apostles? Right? Thomas and Peter and yeah, whatever you can call it that. He was forgiving of his apostles, right? He put up with a lot. You're putting up with a lot. The question is do you put up with everything? And the answer is no, of course not. Right? Of course you don't put up with everything. I look at the proverbs, "Make no friendship with a man given to anger." Okay, so obviously you don't rebuke a fool because you're inviting a beating. Well, there are certain things you don't do with certain people because, you know, all you're doing is kicking yourself in the face. So clearly, there are things I'm not going to do, or people I'm not going to invite over, or conversations I'm not going to have. Right? "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself." So there are plenty of things I'm going to say I'm not going to do that. And I think there's no problem with you saying to your own flesh and blood, you can't come over if my husband's not here. Totally okay. Right? I may not announce that. That may not be wise, but it's like, no, not today, not today. I'll be free at seven, you know, whatever. Why don't you come over at seven? Knowing that my husband will be there. So I don't want to announce these things lest they might say, oh, look at you, you know, building all these walls and fences. So yeah, there's nothing wrong if there are real reasons to say the patterns are so obvious. And this is like just every time I open the door I'm inviting a beating. And just because there are genetics involved, these aren't little kids that you're still, you know, giving



money to or whatever, right? Yeah. I don't have to have my door open to someone who is going to every time they come in, yell at me or use vulgarity at me. No, no, no, I don't, you know, I invite my friends over. So yeah, we need to use common sense. And I get that we have some responsibility, but the responsibility isn't as much as some people make it out to be just because we share genetics with certain people. That's hard. Yeah.

Question: Hey, my question is related to how we interact with Christians from other churches who might not agree with us. Specifically about the theology of the sovereignty of God. So we're aligned with you in the way that you discuss the fact that the sovereignty of God over salvation is a real thing and the responsibility of man is a real thing, but they push back on the sovereignty of God and have a different perspective on that. How should we interact with people like that? A specific example would be Romans Chapter 9. So we might see Romans Chapter 9 as a very clear explanation of how God is sovereign over the salvation of individuals. But then they come back and say that this is not about individuals, this is about how God is responding to Israel as a nation. And so we can't apply that to God being sovereign over individual salvation.

Pastor Mike: Well, I love that response because I have plenty of things I would say about that. But anyway, your question is not that. Your question is how do we respond to people like that. Lovingly and kindly and hey, do you want to come over for hamburgers tomorrow night? They seem to be the ones I would think who are wanting to break fellowship with us. I have no problem having fellowship with them, right? Every time they want to argue about your theology, is that what they do? They want to bring it up all the time.

Question: It sometimes turns into a debate. Then the debate might lead to fresh, mutual frustration. It's actually not about me. I'm asking for somebody else on this.

Pastor Mike: Sure you are. (everyone laughing) Yeah. Here's the thing, this is, as I often say on the radio program, there are different ways to describe the problem because the problem exists for everyone. The Bible clearly talks about God's sovereignty, it clearly talks about man's responsibility. And as D. A. Carson says in his doctoral thesis, you know, if there's a better way to compile the data and state it to where all the data is still represented, well, then have at it. But I think we're stuck with some statements that I think people struggle with. But we have to deal with all the biblical data, and fine, people explain it in different ways, and I'm not going to break fellowship with people over that, you know? Of course, my first fellowship is with my own church body and I wouldn't have any problem if the only people I had over for hamburgers were people in my own church for the rest of my life. But if someone I'm a friend with who goes to another church and I've had a preexisting friendship with him, I'm not going to break fellowship with him, having him come over to the house for burgers because he doesn't like my view on God's sovereignty. They would have to break fellowship with me over that. It's like, I don't mind that you don't agree with my doctrine, and I'm not going to make it an argument every time you come over. I would just say don't get baited into a debate. I don't want a debate you on this. I want to watch football or whatever you want to do with him. I don't want to have a debate over this. If they're Christians and they're saved, why do we want



to debate this? We go to two different churches. It's fine. Right? You're not in a cult group, so let's not make it a debate. That would be my response.

Question: Just a quick follow-up. I know this is probably really deep, but could you just give like a very brief summary as best you can of your comments on Romans Chapter 9? I'm curious to hear that.

Pastor Mike: Well, the way I often say it in a very short period of time is that the way a lot of people describe the tension between human responsibility and God's sovereignty, this is all really predicated on the problem of sin. How bad is the problem of sin, right? How debilitating is depravity? That's the real question. But you're going to either have to say God is sitting there with some, you know, video feed watching the whole thing. He sees what's going to happen, therefore, he goes back to the beginning and then writes in the comments what's going to happen, because he saw what you did. Right? That, as I often say, means that all of his decisions in eternity past are based on your decisions in temporal time. Or we read the biblical data and we say I don't think that's how it works. I think God's decisions are in eternity past. Right? And we in temporal time are making decisions that are predicated on his decisions. Either my decisions are predicated on his decisions, or his decisions are predicated on my decisions. And here's the thing, my decisions are real and his decisions are real. I just think his decisions are bigger than my decisions. And again, is this a problem? It's a problem. I understand it, but God doesn't tell me to live in the problem. He tells me to live on this side of the tapestry and that is that I'm going to have to live always preaching to call people to decision. And I know people don't like that. I have letters, I had one on my desk for a long time that I was going to respond to, it was a lengthy letter about how I use the word "decision" in the Partners Manual. And I was going to write a big "I'm sorry" because, you know, we're making decisions all the time. I'm calling people to decisions all the time. And they thought that just ruined my theology because they use the word "decision" in the Partners Manual. Well, here's the thing, right? We live on this side of the tapestry. I'm calling my kids when I raised my kids to make decisions all the time. Good decisions. So our decisions are culpable decisions. God's holding us accountable for our decisions. The problem is we're never going to choose the right thing unless God gets involved. And that's really the tension. People think that somehow maybe our sin problem is not bad enough for us to need God to choose him. And I think there are enough passages in Scripture that say we're never going to choose God unless God first reaches out to us. And I get that, that makes it like, well, then what about all those other people? Okay, God can do whatever he wants. And that's what Romans Chapter 9 ultimately says, right? God can do and show mercy on whomever he wants to show mercy. All of it depends on God. We just read the book of Job, did we not in our daily Bible reading? How did God come on the scene at the end of the day? Did he say oh Job, I'm really sorry, let me explain everything to you. He doesn't. He says I'm God, you know, why don't you just be quiet for a minute? Was that good enough? I mean, this is a hard topic, but. Okay, you want more? Go ahead. Sorry.

Question: We could follow up later. I'm curious to hear specifically about the argument that is about national Israel. Not about individuals.



Pastor Mike: Okay. But even so, you've just made the argument a little bit higher. What about the poor Italians, right? What about the poor Italians? I'm an Italian. I'm not a Jew. I'm just saying well how does that change anything? Right? I'm not a part of God's electing love that he set on Israel. I don't see how that really changes anything other than making it something at a higher level, on a corporate level. Right? Nations are made up of individuals. And how does he illustrate it? He illustrates it with Esau and Jacob. Right? He illustrates it with Moses and Pharaoh. The illustrations are about individuals.

Question: My question is if you could just expound on the sovereignty of God in regard to effective evangelism. But more importantly, how we should view the role of prayer in connection to his sovereignty in this way.

Pastor Mike: Okay, here's what I would do. Stop worrying about God's sovereignty other than knowing that all those appointed to eternal life will be saved. Therefore, there's hope in my evangelism. I mean, that's the greatest thing of all. I know that in doing evangelism some people in this town are called to eternal life and I'm going to hit every now and then. So I'm going to keep sharing the gospel and calling people to repentance. And some people are going to repent, and then they're going to be up on this platform in a baptismal tank testifying to the grace of God. So I keep going because I know God is calling people to himself. So that's the only time I want to think about the sovereignty of God as it relates to evangelism, that I have hope. Other than that I'm going to pray because he told me to pray. I'm going to ask. I'm going to seek. I'm going to knock. I'm going to know the effectual prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much. I just want to keep asking. I want to keep seeking. I want to keep knocking, and I want to keep sharing the gospel. Here's how it's put in Second Corinthians Chapter 5, "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others." Okay, I want to keep persuading people. That's my job and I want to do that as effectively as I can. Persuading means I'm working toward people to make a decision, right? That's what I'm doing. I believe in the sovereignty of God. Absolutely. And those who do make the right decision, these are people that God's at work in. It's like the soil parable, who prepares the good soil? God prepares the soil. I'm just throwing the seed. That's my job. So go out there and throw the seed because there's some good soil left in South Orange County. So let's just keep working at it. That's how I see it.

All right, let's stand up and then we'll dismiss with a word of prayer. God, thanks for our church. Thanks for this great team of people here who love you and love your Word. Help us to be good students of it. Let this somehow allow us all to take home some nugget of truth that will allow us to be people who are spurred on to love and good deeds. Let us love you more by loving the book that you wrote. And thank you so much for just this eager crowd and just for this good variety of things we've been able to talk about this morning. Dismiss us now with your blessing, your protection, and just your involvement in our hearts in a way that lifts our spirits this week and allows us to live for you.

In Jesus' name. Amen.