

Heart Cry Question Answer Panel 2006

by Paul Washer

Transcript

The question is in regards to how sin affects prayer. We know the scripture verse that says, if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. Does it simply refer to if we refuse to humble ourselves and deal with it or if we have dealt with it but we have yet to carry it out, so to speak, we've surrendered it to the Lord.

What effect, though, does sin have in regards to prayer? Well, the Bible makes it very clear that if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. So then it's useless praying if you have unconfessed sin in your heart and you're aware of that. I think that's made very plain in different parts of the Bible.

Even praying for sick people, as in James chapter 5, it goes on to say, after saying the elders, the prayer of faith will save the sick, it then says, and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. But sins are not forgiven if they're not confessed. So in other words, the elders have to find out, they have to talk to the person they're praying for to find out if there is perhaps sin in their life and the sickness may be because of sin.

It isn't always, but sometimes it is, and that's the way it goes. So sin in the heart, God doesn't listen. I think that one thing that is very, very important is the one to whom the Lord looks has a contrite spirit and trembles at his word.

There is so much, I am so dull in my heart so many times and do not know my secret faults in many, many ways until I come into, you know, maybe the spirit revives me or in the word or a brother rebukes me. And I think one of the things that is so very important is this idea of of a continual brokenness before the Lord. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted. There is a sense in which, you know, it's very dangerous when a person looks at their life and say, well, you know, I don't have any sin. And they walk around pretty arrogant, you know, until something walks them over the head.

But I think that there is a constant state of brokenness and humility before the Lord that even when we have confessed all that we have confessed, there's still this reality of such grace and that when he does speak to us and answer us, it is a work of tremendous grace. Well, in that passage, isn't a key word regarding isn't there a difference between regarding sin and committing sin? It is just it is a recognition and holding on to. You know, the thought occurred to me that if I'm praying with known and confessed sin, I'm in effect praying to an idol, not God, an idol that I'm making him out to be because known sin in my own

life is against him and against not just his law, but his very character and nature.

So why would I talk to him anyway if I'm against him? So just I don't know, it just came to my mind, then any prayer effort with unconfessed sin that's known would have to be prayer to your own idol, not to the true God that you know you're sinning against. We talk about confessing our sins, right? Each night I try to confess my sin, but I find sometimes it's hard to recognize a particular sin. I know that I fall short of God's glory every day.

But how? Most of the time when you have sin, if you're under conviction, you confess your sin right then. But at the end of the day, when you look back at your day and there's no you can't pinpoint your confessed sin. How do you draw that out in order to have a closer walk? Where do you draw the line? How can you make sure you confess every sin that you ever commit and where does grace fit into that? Well, sometimes if I'm correct, sometimes the idea is you can you feel like at the end of the day you need to confess sin, but you don't really know if you've got you don't really know any specific sin and you're just wondering what you should do about that.

The one scripture that comes to my mind may relate is search me, oh God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. It's obviously not a legalistic work that we have to remember everything and then confess it.

What the Holy Spirit brings to mind, we need to quickly agree with the Father about. And then we know that we don't know our own hearts. And so an open, honest heart to the Father that says, Father, search me, cleanse me.

That's sufficient in light of that question, I think. I could add something here, perhaps from the book of Job. It runs like this.

It says he never takes his eyes off the righteous, but with kings are they in the throne. He establishes them forever and they are exalted. And then comes an if.

And if they are bound in fetters and held in cords of affliction, what then? Then he shows them their work and their transgressions, which they have exceeded. And he opens their ear to discipline and he commands that they return from nicking. So sometimes people, they say, well, I prayed and asked God, he didn't show me anything.

Yet I know there's something there. Well, wait a minute. God said it says there so clearly in Job, he shows them their work.

He shows us our transgression. What it really means is we're not listening. Maybe we don't want to hear.

There's one thing that and I totally agree with everything that's been said, one thing that bothers me sometimes is. The Holy Spirit in his work, he convicts us of sin, he convicts us of righteousness also. And I sometimes think that believers also, if I'm renewing my mind with the word of God, according to Romans chapter 12, verse two, if I'm seeking to follow hard after Christ.

You know, I trust and I'm asking God to search me. I am really dealing with that. I trust that the Holy Spirit will search me.

He will tell me and sometimes he may even use other people to come and rebuke me and so many things. But at the same time, I'm always worried that I don't hear a lot of believers rejoicing in in godliness, rejoicing in righteousness, being convicted of that. I feel like a lot of times believers are just many times under the accusation of the devil.

That even if even if after they pray and ask God to search them and they're really, you know, desiring to be pure and to walk with God, even if they don't hear something and and there's no apparent sin, they still almost walk under this guilt and this condemnation. And sometimes I know you can get off balance with this, but sometimes I'm happy. In the ward, because I know he's done a work in me and is doing a work in me and and yes, overcoming, so I don't think that believers need to assume I mean, we know that we sin.

We know that the Holy Spirit points that out. We know that there are sometimes secret sins that maybe lay there until a greater work is done or God shows us more clearly. But at the same time, I think we have to be very careful with just walking in this assumed condemnation that we were always in rebellion because that's not true.

Paul said that he exercised himself to have a conscience void of offense before God and men, so he exercised himself, he searched his heart and but then it says, you know, in John, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God. We know when our heart is clean, conscience is clear. Yes.

I don't know how thoroughly you can answer this question, but I know that I sometimes have an inclination or I feel that God may be leading me to do something, maybe witness to somebody or sometimes, like you said, some crazy things. I was just wondering, is there a way to discern between what is God's will, if he's leading you to do it or if it's your own thoughts or if it's maybe evil? Let me just say, first of all, that people get in a really bad trap in this, they're not really renewing their mind in the word of God as a practice, and then they come to a crossroads where they need to discern the will of God. And so they go to the Bible as though a magic book to find the answer for God's will.

And that is not really how God has set it up. In Romans 12 to we go back to that, the idea of renewing your mind to know what the will of God is. So before a situation ever comes into place where I have to discern, is God leading or not? One of the things I need to be sure of is that as a life practice, I am constantly renewing my mind in the word of God because that holds promise.

Secondly, if I believe knowing that and checking my life there, if I believe God's leading me to do something, clearly we know this. If it contradicts a direct command of scripture or biblical principles, we know it's not the Holy Spirit leading us. But let's say that that I'm renewing my mind in the word of God.

It does not contradict commands or principles or to do it doesn't contradict other things. Then one of the things that I will do, of course, I pray, but I'll also seek godly counsel. I can recall several times in my life when I've gone to men that I greatly respected and authorities over me and asked them to pray about in opinions and usually by renewing my mind in the word of God, searching the scriptures, praying, you know, and checking out my motives, you know, am I seeking first the kingdom of God, going to godly, godly men to pray with me and to pray for me? Very rarely have I have I tripped up that way.

Well, of course, it has to be what is what you're hearing or feeling has to be totally consistent with the word of God. And one of the problems today is this, that the average Christian knows very little of the word of God. I remember one time this fellow taught a Sunday school class in a local church and he heard me preach and he said, you quoted the verse and I just couldn't locate it.

And I know my Bible very well. He says, I know the New Testament off by heart. He said, but that verse.

I said, what was the verse? Well, he said the verse was, how shall we escape? We neglect so great salvation. He said, well, where is that? And I said, in the book of Hebrews. Oh, he said, I knew it had to be in the Old Testament.

I know the New Testament off by heart. You know, there's a lot of that kind of stuff going. People don't know the Bible, so they're open to satanic deception constant.

And if they don't pray, you have to get along with God and wait on God, you know. The big trouble today in the church or among Christians is this, I'm in a hurry and God isn't. And the Bible says, wait on the Lord.

It means exactly that. And you have to spend time with God, maybe some hours at times, even not be, not make hasty decisions on some impression we have or some impression somebody else gives to us. So.

To piggyback on his question, can we get to the point to to where we are so concerned with following God's will that we are just we we we miss the point. Oh, God, do you want me to have cereal this morning or waffles? You know, my wife always makes those decisions. One thing I tell college students, and this is very important, college students are famous for this or infamous for this.

They wear themselves out emotionally, physically and spiritually trying to figure out God's will for their life. They're going to graduate, they're going to marry this girl, this and this and back and forth. And I always tell them a very childlike thing that I've worked just in my own life.

And it's this. I just keep doing exactly what I'm doing and following the Lord and his commands the best that I can. And I do not worry about a deviation from that until God makes it so clear to me that I know I need to do something else that I know that if I don't do it, I'm in disobedience.

And to that point, I don't put a lot of just I don't waste a lot of energy trying to work through that. Let me just say, you know, bloom where you're planted. As a pastor, I often have energetic, enthusiastic, sometimes young Christians.

How do I know the will of God? And then I'll check and they're not real faithful in Sunday school. I'll check and they don't come to our outreach visitation program. They're not in accountability group with another believer to sharpen themselves.

And so the basic things that we should be doing, we're not doing. We want God to give us a special direction for some spectacular thing over here. Make sure you're faithful where you are.

And exhaust yourself in the commitments you have where you are. And I'm just convinced you're not going to miss God's will if you're faithful in the small things, let's say, the everyday things of your local church family. So many of the decisions we make, you know, it's surprising how many decisions we make without, you know, without a prayer meeting or without having to have a Bible verse or something like that.

You know, it's like 1 Thessalonians 3, Paul says, when he could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind. Is it that Athens alone? And he said, we thought it best, you know, and so here's a Christian. He has a renewed mind and he's to that level of spirituality.

And and so, you know, it seems best. This seems like the right thing to do. You know, it seems like the right thing to do to put my shoes on in the morning and a lot of things like that.

And so sometimes we just don't have a striking revelation. And I mean, even on a thing like that, like Paul was talking about, he says, I thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone. We sent Timothy.

And so some things are like that. Please, my heart, are we, I've heard said our Baptist churches have a lot of lost people in them and I think they are saved. They're at least attending the Sunday morning services and I've heard it said a lot.

And it's very greedy. I was wondering how you felt about that. First of all, it's true.

We do. And it's not just confined to Baptists. It's confined.

It's not confined. It's rampant in evangelicalism today. And the reason for it is, first of all, the gospel that is preached is no gospel at all.

It's a gospel reduced from Christ, the God man, going to a tree and dying under the wrath of his father and rising again from the dead and seated at the right hand of the father and calling all men, commanding all men to repent and believe that the proof of saving faith is the continued fruit in their life. We've reduced all that down to five things God wants you to know. Our four spiritual laws.

And if you jump through each one of those and say yes, and then pray the little prayer in the back, some evangelist who should spend less time preaching and more time studying his Bible declares you say I'm very opinionated with regard to this. That's just the point. So our gospel, second of all, there's it seems to me that when I look at.

I don't consider the Catholic Church to ever have been a church. But when I look at the Catholic Church, when I look at Anglicanism and what was going on in England, when I look at what was going on in in New England and what goes on today, it seems to me that always the devil works it out so that the great assumption is they're saved. The least amount of time, it seems, eventually is given to discerning what is the gospel and whether a person is truly saved.

If they just walk up front and they pray that prayer, we declare him saved and start discipling them. We should maybe be working with this person for months that they come to a biblical assurance. And so our churches are filled with lost people.

And it's by and large because the superficiality of pastors and most of them have gone to church growth schemes and turn their church into six flags over Jesus. And they no more are preaching the gospel than a man on the moon. That's not a it's not just a contemporary.

No, it probably was. I read this week where A.W. Pink, I mean, he could he got pretty discouraged at times and could be seemed like he could be harsh. But in his day, in the 1930s and 40s, he made the statement that he wondered if two percent of Protestantism were born again at all in America.

Well, even the great one of the greatest, most well-known evangelists in America today has said that if even five percent of all the people that have been converted in his meetings are Christian, he would be happy. And another thing about is so important is the idea of a compassionate. Loving church discipline.

I find it very strange that people do not practice church discipline because they love their congregation more than Jesus does. Jesus commanded them to practice church discipline, not upon sinful people were also but upon rebels who show no fruit and will not turn. And see, and the thing that's really bad is we have

just come out of a liberalism.

There was a move among many denominations, especially the Southern Baptist Convention, saying that liberalism is out. We're going right. It hasn't taken us not even a decade to go right back into neoliberalism, which, in my opinion, the new liberalism is.

Basically, the church growth movement where everything is done on on marketing strategies and finding the, you know, tell us what kind of church you want. That's what we'll give you instead of asking God what kind of bride he desires. I have a daughter named Joanna, and she professed to be saved, was baptized, joined the church and seemed to be a very genuine Christian.

When she went to school, she always had a Bible on top of her school books. The principal of school told us, he said, we sure like having your daughter in our school. And I said, why? And he said, if there's any hanky panky going on and your daughter finds out, she blows the lid off this place.

He said, we're so glad she's there. And during the revival, she came to me one night and said, Daddy, I'd like to be saved. I said, what? You mean you're backslidden? She said, Daddy, I've never known the Lord.

I knew the language, I got the language from you and mom, but I never known the Lord. And so I led her to Christ. And then before the revival, I had an assistant pastor, great song leader and great teaching children.

But he was with us for six or eight months and the deacons and I felt he's not producing. And we talked with him and finally we had to ask him to leave. And he did.

During the revival, he phoned me one night long distance and he said, last night I was praying and God showed me that I've never been born again. Can I come down to Saskatoon and you spend some time? I said, certainly. So we came down, we got some pastors together and he knelt and we all knelt and we counseled with him and he prayed.

And I'll never forget, he suddenly cried, God is real. God is real. What a transformation.

So there's likely lots of people like that to know the language. They've heard it from others, but they don't know the Lord. This must have been a burden for the Lord Jesus, too, because one time it struck me that almost all, if not all of the parables.

That the Lord spoke had to do with this matter of true and false profession. I mean, the two builders, the sower in the soils, wheat in the tares, the sheep and the goats, and just almost all of the parables have to do with this very thing. Anything else, Bruce? Greatest mission field today is the church or what's called the church.

You know, I've been thinking a lot about especially men and maybe men in prominent positions, maybe like, you know, Brother Jeff, he's a pastor here at First Baptist. And when you get to places like even you guys are and even myself, where you're pastoring and a lot of people come to hear you preach and speak. We're always convicted to confess our sins to the Lord, to go before him in prayer.

But how important is it, no matter where you are, who you are, to confess those sins to other men and to other believers? And how important is it to always do that? What would be the difference? And would there be a time where you would just confess to the Lord? There is a time where the Lord may lead us.

We even see the dictate of scripture to confess our sins to others. You have to use a tremendous amount of wisdom in doing that, because most people and I mean, most people are not trustworthy.

Most people are gossips and they will hurt you. For me, if I felt like I needed to go and speak with someone, I would go to the elders of my church. I would entrust myself to those men.

There are friends that I will. There are some things that I entrust with everyone. If you noticed while I was preaching here tonight, I made quite clear some of my failings and my needs, especially with regard to spirituality.

I feel very comfortable sharing that. There are some things that I can share with other brothers who are closer to me, maybe certain needs and weaknesses I have that I wouldn't share with the entire community. And then there may be other things that I would want to go directly to my elders.

Those who are elders in the church and deal with them are very, very close friends. I know a lot of pastor friends that I've worked with in the past. They like to have friends out of town, maybe not in their own church.

Is there wisdom in that? What is that biblical? You know, that scares me. You've got a fellowship of believers that you're supposed to be tied to more than just about anybody on the face of the earth. You're your local fellowship of faith.

If I have to go out of town to find someone that I can trust, I need to be a part of a different fellowship. I mean, you know, I mean, that's that's they're my family. I mean, they're, you know, and another thing, you know, this is very important.

I had a young man, this may help some young men here, and he called me up one day and he was having he was just newly married. He was having he was battling with his thought life. You know, he walked down the street, battle with awkward glance and things like that.

And and he was confessing every battle with his thought life to his wife in order to be sincere or to be. And I said, young man, I said, you're killing her. You're going to kill her.

I said, you may be soothing your conscience. You may be calming your conscience, but you're killing this woman. And he pulled out a bunch of verses out of context and just railed on me and went away.

I would imagine he's probably divorced now or either has a wife that's totally destroyed. And so be very careful. A lot of times we're wanting to confess something to get it off of our chest, but we keep it on the head of another person.

And, you know, I want to go back to church leadership. There is a reason for elders and there's a reason why you choose where certain men are chosen. And it's a comfort when you have men who are seeking to be biblical, broken.

They're trustworthy. It's such a comfort because that's what God has established. We've got another question here.

I would love to hear you, Brother Jeff, speak a little bit about our accountability system and the way it works here in this church. I think it would be worth these folks hearing how we how we structure that to help answer what Brother Nathan was asking. You're talking specifically about accountability groups.

And having that one on one accountability partner. Well, we begin 20 plus years ago, actually, with the students just having an accountability partner. For what I like to say, to keep the lazy streak in check, you know, I think accountability, being accountable and quoting your verses for the week and having a daily quiet time and sharing the gospel regularly.

You can do that like a mechanical robot. We all know that. But if you love God, the power of shame is good.

Brothers can help each other. And so that's been a very, I think, beneficial thing in the body here for four years. Switching back to the original question, Brother Nate posed, I know he's going to be a pastor, has pastored and has that heart.

I've been here 26 years and I have an incredible blessings confessing weaknesses and struggles with brothers. I have also shared weaknesses and struggles with brothers who used it to try to destroy me. This church doesn't need me, but it does need God's called pastor.

And so there's a sense in which you protect yourself and your reputation to the end of the good of the body of Christ. And so I would say be very careful and wise and prayerful about that. And perhaps maybe young ministers, I guess, thinking about myself, we probably overdo that.

We probably err by trying to be too transparent, too humble. Perhaps had an older gentleman in my church six or so years ago and said, Pastor, would you quit telling us how weak you are and how you struggle in all these areas? So people don't like you and they're using it. You know, so and that was wise.

That was not good. I think my motives were good, but I was unwise and immature. The second question is not related, but the second question is in the early church, they somewhere on a minimum of three years of preparation before baptism and even in some moves even before communion.

How much time should be invested in supposed new converts before baptism, before entry into communion? I'd just like to hear some feedback on that. You know, each person is so different as churches. We want to develop a system and run somebody through a machine.

And that's not an that's an organization. It's not an organism. And in my mind is that, you know, a person come to a biblical assurance, a biblical assurance.

And, you know, that's through counseling, that's through loving, it's talking to them and waiting. And some people, you know, there's going to be is going to come quicker than others. So the idea of biblical assurance is working with each individual, taking them through scripture and saying, you know, a lot of times during, well, Wednesday nights.

I mean, Brother Jeff is back and that's it's all that he's doing is meeting with person after person. And it's not just one time. It's been times they meet with other people.

And it's just discern. It's not to try to make, you know, you've got to reach some certain level to be in this club. It's just that if you if you're a pastor and you really love people, the thing you're going to work hardest on is that they if they have if they're not really safe, that that false assurance is destroyed.

And if they are really saved, that they have biblical assurance. On the baptism question, you look in the New Testament, I mean, the Book of Action, all you see immediate baptisms upon confession, I mean,

almost immediate. And Peter, I mean, Philip said to the Ethiopian eunuch, and if you believe with all your heart, you may be baptized for what I don't know that it's any consolation, but you find Peter baptize Simon falsely.

So even he did that. But it does seem like there's a some scripture for being careful on certain categories of people like the Pharisees. You know, John the Baptist said, let's see some fruit.

And I think that would apply to children, too. I mean, just so often they just they don't understand enough. And so there's I think maybe there's some scripturalness for being cautious on those that are likely to make more likely to make a false profession.

One of the basis of the New Covenant says they shall all be taught of God. The least of them, the greatest of them, they shall all be taught of God, and they'll have a knowledge of their iniquities being removed, taken away. Again, dropping the ball theologically.

Taking, you know, how many pastors have I heard say, you know, to a person who is doubting their salvation, well, have you ever asked, was there a point in time in your life when you asked Jesus to come in your heart? And if they said yes, they'd say, well, were you sincere? And if the person said, well, I think so, they'd say, well, you're saved and that's the devil bothering you. That's the extent of what it's come to. Another thing that's a big problem, and I hate to keep harping on this, but God does not have a plan B. Or he told us how to deal with his church.

And one of the great problems is this. Again, a biblical, compassionate church discipline is not practiced. Because if you're baptizing people, just all kinds of people, and even no matter how careful you are, even if you're Peter, you're going to baptize someone who's a sorcerer.

Alright? And they're in the church. And they stay there. Why? Because church discipline isn't practiced.

So a big part of this is not the problem with discerning baptism, it's the fact that once someone's in the church, they can run rampant in ungodliness and no one does anything. And so that's a big problem. Let me throw in this that we've experienced here.

We started with church discipline before we had a healthy understanding of conversion. And to be honest, I was converted at age 19, had no church background at all. And I was real troubled with the typical Southern Baptist easy-believism.

I didn't know what to call it, easy-believism, at the time. But yet I bought into some of it, and we had something of a paradox going on. We have discipline over here, we believe conversion really changes you, but all the known people say do this quick-fix, hoop-jump conversion thing, and it was a mess.

But because of church discipline, I was forced to deal with the doctrine of conversion. Because I was having to discipline so many. And I thought, my goodness, I just baptized this person a month ago, and there's already a discipline case in the church.

And it's as if God, somebody said one time, if God had ever spoken to you, it was louder than that. You know, God said, you don't know what conversion is. And I don't know thousands of hours I spent studying the doctrine of conversion.

I mean, immersing myself. Church history, our Baptist theologians and others, and just the book of Ephesians particularly, because I was preaching through that book. And, I mean, it was a wrestle, a fight, a struggle.

Am I crazy? Am I going too far? To where now I'm at peace. I'm not saying I've arrived, but I'm at peace with how we're dealing with seekers now. And following up on what Bob said, I think Acts does appear to give the impression that folks are baptized immediately.

But have we ever been in a Pentecostal type work of the Spirit? You've got to take that in context. Jonathan Edwards, I think, is so right when he says, in an unusual, genuine move of the Spirit, you may know in 30 minutes if a man is truly converted. But usually that's not possible.

And there's a reason why Paul told Timothy, do the work of an evangelist. And the first time I read that verse that I can remember, I thought about the evangelist I'm in. I thought, what work is this? 12 or 15 sermons, 20-minute message, walk down the aisle.

There's no work. And then when I began to understand what conversion biblically should look like, and now I'm counseling with people. I sometimes leave here at 9 or 10 o'clock on the day I sit aside to counsel with people about baptism.

I am absolutely exhausted. It's a joyous exhaustion, but it's work. It's the work of laboring with fear before God about this person's soul and even more so the health of the bride of Christ.

And brothers, those of you that are going to the pastor, here's the issue. Do you love God? And is His bride that important to you? It is. It is that important.

It'll make you rethink and examine and reformulate everything you're doing in that area. And it's just been a long pilgrimage and a struggle and suffering. And people misunderstanding and leaving and persecution.

But if you're on that pilgrimage, keep going. Keep seeking God. What can be more important than the doctrine of conversion? I mean, and it's not four spiritual laws or walk down the aisle and pray this prayer.

It's massive. I don't want anybody preaching to my daughters that it's just this little thing and that little thing. I want them to care for their souls.

And so, to be quite honest, I've had to repent of a thousand and one other things you can do in a large church that's well-organized and well-structured like we are, which can be idols to a pastor like myself who's gifted to do that and get myself back to poring over preaching and counseling those the Spirit is moving in and realizing that is my work. And, you know, it's amazing. If that gets right, I don't mean perfect, but if that gets right, everything else starts to work pretty good.

So fight that fight in that area. It's a great question. How does the pastor begin to lead his church, men, to hold him accountable? What would be the process for me to have men that would rise up in my church to hold me accountable, especially in the sense of seeing how many ministers are falling these days? I know that I'm susceptible to falling myself.

And as far as accountability, one of the things that really hurts pastors, hurts a pastor, or anyone that God starts to use, is you begin to think somehow you're different from everyone else in the congregation, that

you're special, that there are rules that everyone else needs to go by that maybe you don't. Personally, I'm just telling you what I've heard a lot of men who have fallen say was their catch. They thought somehow, it was like they were God's spoiled rotten brat, and could get away with anything.

One thing I was bothered about when I was praying before coming out to preach was that when you're... I remember saying to the Lord, Lord, I'm more gifted than I am godly. That's a terrible thing to think about. Your giftedness can get you in a whole lot of trouble.

Because a lot of people will equate giftedness with godliness, and that's not true. And so to know that. Another thing is, I feel like in my church, and in the ministry here, that I have brothers and colleagues, that it's not me here and everybody else down here, but I have this fellowship of people who hold me accountable.

They love me, they respect my gifts, but they don't trust the arm of the flesh, even if it's attached to me or anyone else. And so when you're separated like you're the big deal, it's very dangerous. But when you have elders around you, again, it's the idea of elders working together as brothers and holding one another accountable.

First, I've got to let you know I'm terrified to ask this, because I know when I ask it, I'm going to be held accountable for the answer. But hopefully I'm not alone. I share Paul's heart on the problem that's happening in the church.

This cheap, easy-believe-ism, I was a product of it. I was saved when I was 12. I walked the aisle, Baptist church, said the prayer, got baptized.

And at 33 years old, I started looking at my life, and somebody threw Hebrews 10.26 at me, if we deliberately continue in sin after receiving a knowledge of the truth, you know the rest of it. And I couldn't believe that was in the Bible. And then I started digging in the Bible myself, and I said, man, there's no evidence that the Holy Spirit is in me.

And it's like it's almost as if God said, are you ready to start doing it my way now? And at that point I had to totally turn away from my old life, and I never looked back after that. Now, praise God, I know I'm saved. And I so appreciated your wife's testimony too, Charles' testimony.

But what would you say, what kind of advice would you give to someone who has just a burning passion to see the church come alive again? I mean, I don't have the heart of a pastor, but I preach, and I have the heart of an evangelist. And where I come from in Chicago, there are tons of churches who don't have pastors because they're failing and falling and pulpits are empty and they need people to come and speak. And I've got such a strong burden to go and guard the good deposit, and part of that is preaching the truth.

And you always say it's a terrifying thing to preach. Well, it's not really a terrifying thing to preach, it's a terrifying thing to preach the truth in front of people who don't want to hear it. And if I preach, I know I have to do that, I don't have a choice.

But I know I have this overwhelming burden on my heart. I'd love to just pack everything up and go to every pulpit I could and just preach the church and try and share my passion with them to see them come alive, but I don't even know where to start. So I guess I'm just looking for some wisdom.

What would you say to somebody who knows that there's a burden on their heart for that and God's gifted them? As an evangelist? Okay. There are two evangelists right over here that I can hardly recommend. When they go to a church, they preach the truth.

And I'll answer your question, but what you need to do is just after this service, you just need to get over here and talk to these men because that's their burden and that's what they do. They fight that fight. They do the work of the evangelist and things like that.

One thing I want to say, and this is also for the young guys here, I'm well known for my shocking messages, he never got asked back. You know? And it's... We need you back. Yeah.

But here's the problem, when people come and they'll hear me preach or teach on Wednesday night here or some radio interviews I've done, they get real disappointed. Because I thought you were this flame-throwing... You know, sometimes God lays it on your heart and you must preach like that and it causes things to get all shook up. But also at the same time, you walk into a church and you look at this, you just don't want to tell them they're wrong.

You want to look at these people, some of them belong to God. You know, I was saved when I was 21 and didn't believe hardly any of the truths I believe now. And you know, I could have been crushed by me.

And the thing is, you want to go in these churches, and I'm all for men called to be evangelists, but when you go in, you need to look and say, alright, how can I bring these people, how can I reach them? It's not just about telling them what's true and showing them how wrong they are, even though that's part of it. It's loving those people. And for the most part, you know, one of the things I always tell young guys, if you feel like God's given you a real message of truth, make sure your knees are bleeding.

Make sure that you're crying for the souls of these people that you have to preach harshly to sometimes. But I really would recommend, brother, you go over there. I'll introduce you here in a little while.

We've got two evangelists here who do that work. If you don't find receptivity in the churches, you might consider the streets. You know, Paul said, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

Okay, good. And that's what Whitfield did and Wesley did, and remarkably, Charles Spurgeon spent more time in the street than I was aware of, I learned yesterday. So that's a thing to do.

Many people, Paul, want to know why you moved from southern Illinois down here. It's because you finally found a church that did ask you to come back. Yeah, I'm still, I'm out on that one.

I'm wondering why. No, the reason why I came, this is a really good thing to understand. And I can say this in the presence of the elders here, the pastor.

It was a humbling thing for me to come here. And I want to say this so that young guys will understand some things. It was God's will for me to come here.

I know it. I love being here. I love the people here.

I love the teaching that my children are getting. The preaching from the pulpit, I love it. What I'm trying to say is, if I had gone to a place that was, you know, a church of a hundred, a little humble building, which was where I've always been, you know, it would have raised no eyebrows.

We came here. And it's a big church. It's got a lot of people.

And they've got a lot of things. And it's a lot of things different than what I have been. And in coming here, you know, it didn't fit.

It didn't fit what I was, what I thought I was, or what I thought I needed to be, and a lot of different things. And it just showed me, it was such a rebuke to me, that as some people boast in being a part of a really big church, with a lot of stuff, other people boast of not being in a big church, and not having a lot of stuff. And everybody's just boasting.

And the thing about it is, is, you know, I looked over at my wife one day, when Brother Jeff was preaching, and just almost tears coming down her face. Just so happy to be hearing the Word. And man, that just sold me.

She goes, I just want the Word. I just want to be preached to. And then came here, and you know, I'm just happy.

I am so happy. I've been so strengthened. God moved us here, in this church.

We never wanted to put money into buildings, and we were all in a room, about 15 by 18, and literally all of us in this room, with a bunch of computers, and working with John Green in a room is difficult. No worries. And here we were able to, you know, this church has done everything.

I mean, they have given us a place to be. Just, you can't have something go on that there's not just, I don't know, countless people saying, just what can I do? Just tell me. And I've loved it.

It's been a rebuke to me. You know, it just shows you how God is at such working. And I wouldn't want to be any other place in the world, because I know I'm right in the middle of God's will.

My family's here in the Word of God. The other people who came with us, Matt and Amanda and John and Gobby and others that have come, it's all the same. We're here in the Word, and there are people here God's really done a work they desire.

I want to just say one thing. I'm going to try to get it produced tomorrow. I don't know.

I would really love for all of you that could, especially the pastors, to get some CDs, a DVD that we want to put out that's of the baptisms. I wish you could see some of these people getting baptized. You have a 14-year-old girl standing up there, and you just think that she just read from Jonathan Edwards.

She'll tell you, you know, I made a profession of faith when I was eight years old. There was no conviction of sin, no conviction of the righteousness of God, no fear of hell. I just made a decision.

I've sat in church. I've done everything. But then one day, Brother Jeff said one thing.

And you'll hear these kids say this. The Spirit of God began to work in my heart, and He regenerated me, and I'm a new creature. And I'm going, man, that's what I want to hear my five-year-old, my three-year-old, and my wife's pregnant.

I want to hear all of them say that one day. So, that's why we're here. My question is concerning mentorship, and I would like to hear your advice to a young guy who seems to have looked quite some

time in the area in which he lives, and not saying that there's not godly men in the area, but not really godly men who have the time to invest in young guys.

So, what would be your advice to a young guy who truly longs to have a godly mentor in his life and to teach him and to show him the ways of God but seems to can't really find it? Let me say something real quick. That is so important. Eighteen years ago, when we had our first church discipline case, I could not find one Southern Baptist church that did discipline.

I had to fly to California and see John MacArthur and his staff. That is a shame. And one of the things that burns in my heart is that other pastors don't need to have to do that.

So, that is so valuable. It's not where you go to school. It's who you study under.

So, keep that in heart. I don't know who that is for you, but that is the issue at hand is being mentored by someone like a John. You know, John MacArthur wasn't personally available to me that often.

I didn't mean that. But his staff was, and more than anything, the Spirit of God will tell you the truth. Maybe you are like me.

Maybe I am just weak. I don't know. But I just need somebody to tell me I am not crazy.

Everything we did here, as God has been reforming us, I went through this thing of self-doubt and introspection. You just need guys to say, No, that is your own track. That is okay.

Let me sharpen and help you with your thinking. So, I believe that is the thing God is going to do. I believe there is an awakening going on, particularly young men going to the ministry.

And I think they are going to need to be equipped differently than the institutionalized, maybe Greek, system of seminary. Though there is much good there, and I don't mean to say don't go to seminary, but if you are not trained in the real-life laboratory, in a figure of speech, of the local church under a man of God, I think you have missed a lot. There are several men in this congregation right here that I have never lived closer than six hours to, and yet my life has been just totally influenced by them.

So, here is the thing, and for pastors they need to hear this, you might have a contact with a young man for 45 minutes, and in 45 minutes God used that to totally change you. Absolutely. You don't have to have a program to be mentored.

We don't want to turn everything into a program. Second of all, there are men here right now that are pastors that have mentored more young guys around them. Brother Mike Morrow is here from Kentucky, and they have got all kinds of young guys at his church that they are learning to preach by just watching a preacher and listening to a preacher and then teaching them.

Another thing to the pastors that are here, if there are any pastors, just look at what we are doing. Pastors, we are not marketing strategists, we are not gophers, we are not movers and shakers, we are not planners, we are to be men of God, and we are to take the young men, all the men, we are to train them, we are to pour our lives into them. Let me also say this, a lot of you that may be here are Southern Baptists, and you don't have to, Southern Baptists need to realize something.

Southern Baptists are like a spiritual ghetto. You have got all the money in the world, you have got all the biggest buildings in Nashville and everything else, but you don't realize that to many other groups, you are

nothing more than a laughing stock. They laugh at you.

It is little boys playing church instead of men of God in the presence of God, preaching the Word of God. You are seeing two things that are happening, at least in the Southern Baptist denomination. You are seeing men who are basically going for these models of how to make a church big.

And basically everything they see is just going to burn on the Day of Judgment. And you are seeing men who are saying, no, I am going to preach God's Word. I am going to find out what God wants in a church, and that is what we are going to have, even if no one shows up.

We are going to just seek to do that. And part of that is that Timothy, is mentoring that Timothy. And pastors, you know, we are all about, it just seems like we have either got nothing, or we have got to have this big Bible institute.

God brings a couple of young guys under you, and you do not do anything with them because you do not have an institute. You do not need an institute. Those three guys that God has given you, is it like the Zerubbabel, should we despise the day of small things? I mean, my goodness, you pour your life into those three young men, God might use them to turn the world around.

We are just missing the forest for the trees. We are just not seeing what is in front of us, to pour our lives into these young guys. But, pastors, the young guys God is raising up, they do not want to learn strategies, and they do not want to learn how to be a youth minister.

They want to learn theology. They want to learn what the Bible says about God. They want you to open up your mouth, and teach them about the sovereignty of God, the justice of God, and Christ dying under the wrath of God.

The things that are the real Gospel. You've got to have it to give it. I think your question is so important, not just for young guys, but young ladies, younger women with older women, across the board.

I know when the Lord saved me I was 19, and I had gotten out of church completely, and I didn't know anything anyway before that. I knew nothing. Two Christians put two books in my hand.

And I said, well, this is good. I didn't know where Romans was or anything. But one book somebody put in my hands was Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth.

I read that. I was a new Christian. I read it, and my heart said, this is rubbish.

And not that Satan is alive, but the other book that was put in my hand was A. W. Pink's Sovereignty of God. I was a 19-year-old, brand-new Christian. I read that, and I said, this is great.

This is true. And what I saw God do, right after I was converted, after work, I would take my paperback Living Bible to the park and I would read it until it was too dark to read. I had nobody.

And I asked God to teach me. And I asked God, even then, to bring into my life those who could influence me in the right way. That's the place to begin.

The men that would mentor others may not be right for you. Ask God to bring those. And what I began to see was whether through books or relationships or men of God that I would hear preach, I just kind of became what I call a spiritual leech.

I'd drive to hear them. I'd call them on the phone. I would bug them in a respectful way.

I'd ask questions. And God graciously just gave me so many men that I loved and that God used all of them. There are mentors in different ways that God brings into our lives.

I know I have a co-elder in my church who he thinks that I've mentored him, but his walk and example and blamelessness have mentored my life far more than I think I have his life. And so, just ask God to bring those. As the Scripture says, he who walks with the wise will become wise.

So you hang those who you see and hear the voice of truth from, hang around them. And God will birth relationships. So, I want to thank one of the biggest mentors in my life are dead guys.

I know it sounds spooky, but... George Mueller has had a tremendous impact. Hudson Taylor had a tremendous impact on my life. James O. Frazier, Mountain Rain, tremendous impact on my life.

Charles Spurgeon, tremendous impact. Leonard Ravenhill, even though I was able to meet him twice, had a tremendous impact. Another thing, let me say this.

Look for more than theological correctness. Now, theological correctness is necessary, but look for more than that. Because I know a lot of guys are theologically correct that are dead and adorning.

It's a man of God. Leonard Ravenhill, for example, theologically on some things we would differ. Leonard Ravenhill was a man of God.

He knew God. God knew him. Look for that.

Don't look for the... A friend of mine up in Detroit a while back, he actually bumped into a minister of a very, very large church there in Detroit and said, well, what do you do? And he said, I'm the minister of marketing. He was actually the minister of marketing in the church. Don't get a guy like that to disciple you.

You want a minister of God to disciple you. By the way, I have a thing called Shepherd's College, and I meet with five, six, eight men every Saturday morning for two and a half hours. And then for any who... They don't all feel called to full-time ministry, but any who do, they come Saturday mornings, and then I have another at least one night a week that I spend two or three hours with those who feel called into the ministry.

And to date, I think four have gone into full-time work and are doing well in churches, one in Humboldt, Nebraska, and the others up in Canada. And so I'm not pastoring now. I did many years before the Revival in 71.

So I'm doing what I can. And I just pray for God to send men to me. And when he does that, I don't advertise anything.

But we've been having some great times with some of these men. One of the young men that we trained, he went into ministry about five years ago, I guess. He was phoning me the other day, and he says, they're going to have to enlarge their church buildings.

So many are being saved, you know. And really great things. I think it's quite close to Revival where he is.

And thank God for that. My daughter used to drive 30 miles to work. And I told her, get some good CDs.

Right there is your Bible school. I got a letter in 1979. It had two sentences, and they were short.

Mac and Linda. I've moved to Lindale, Texas. I've started a prayer meeting on Friday nights.

Come, Leonard Ravenhill. And those in our church at that time were so hungry that we drove starting that month. It started several years of driving two hours one way Friday after work to be in the prayer meeting with Keith Green and Leonard Ravenhill.

For years. And if you're hungry, don't let anything rob you of getting under the men and women of God that God wants you under. I could add something here too.

In my church, when I did pastor, there was a man called Gordon Bailey. And he was a cattle inspector with the Saskatchewan government. He only had great education.

And he'd been in my church six years before the revival started. He was always in church and prayer meetings, Sunday morning, Sunday evening, the whole bit. But he told me he'd never, ever spoken to a soul about Christ.

He was afraid of that, and he said, I used to sit in the congregation in mortal fear that you might call on me to lead in prayer and do something like that. And he said, that had happened on a drop through the floor. Well, I spent a lot of time with him before the revival.

He used to go to his farm. He had a herd of Black Angus cattle and talk with them and talk with them. And I gave him the New Testament on tape because as a cattle inspector, he traveled a lot.

So he listened to these tapes by the hour. Then during the revival, one Sunday morning, he walked to the front, stood by the communion table, and said something like this. I've been sitting in the back row for two years because I'm backslidden, and I hate some of you people, and I've been shooting arrows at the backs of your heads.

I want to be forgiven. Can you forgive me this? I want to walk with God. So they forgave him.

I asked my deacon to take him into my office and pray with him, and he did. And he went home. Then he did something.

Listen carefully. He set out four chairs, three children and his wife, and he sat in a chair here facing them and asked each one to forgive him for being such a poor Christian, such a poor daddy, such a poor husband. He said, Pastor, it was the hardest thing I ever did in all my life.

But you know what happened? That very night, he was working in the barn with his Angus cattle, and I'll tell you what I heard him say in meetings where he gave his testimony. Here's what he said. Suddenly, God filled me with the Holy Ghost from top to toe.

He didn't speak in tongues or anything like that. All he knew was that God had filled him. He led 30 people to Christ in about nine months.

Just in his job, he went to an Indian reserve and led 35 Indians to Christ and got a permanent work established on the reserve. Then churches began asking him to give their testimony. And finally, in one year, only on weekends, he preached 105 times.

Nobody worried about the Queen's English being tortured sometimes. They missed all of that. This man, the power of God was on his life in a marvelous way.

You know, he had meetings where the entire congregation would come to the altar at the end of his message. I asked him one day, and I'll just share this. I said, do you ever have any trouble getting messages? Oh, no.

No, he said. I've got to know the New Testament very well. I have trouble in another area.

And I said, what is it? He said, if I have a fight with my wife, I don't make it up, and I go out to preach. Nothing happens. I've got to phone home, make things right with my wife, and then the power of God comes on me again.

I know that it seems like the call of God gets thrown around church a lot, and I understand the idea that we're supposed to bloom where we're planted, as you said, Pastor, but I was just wondering what you guys thought about foreign missions, whether or not that has a special calling, or if that's just implied for everybody in the Great Commission. Well, the Great Commission is for everyone. It is.

There's no question about that. Everyone with the same dedication ought to embrace the challenge of the Great Commission. The only question is this.

Are you called to go down in the well, or are you called to hold the rope for those who go down? But both of them, with the same dedication, ought to hold on to the rope, and they ought to have scars on their hands. Now, here's an interesting thing. I hear a lot of people who will say, and Keith Green used to say this, if you're not called to stay, you need to go.

And what's amazing is for the people who really are called, when they say that, it's true. Sometimes I have seen God, let me put it this way, I've seen people say, well, if you're not called to stay, you need to go, and they go, but that's the way God called them. And other people, you know, you need to realize that you have to be sensitive to the will of God in this sense.

If God tells you to be a janitor in Nebraska and pray in your prayer closet there after you get your work done, to pray for four hours a day and intercede, but you go off to Namibia and start 25 churches, you're out of God's will, and you're doing a whole bunch of damage. So you need to know, you know, it's not just knowing the will of God when to speak, it's knowing the will of God when to be silent, not just to go, but to stay. And if you will follow hard, a book I can heartily recommend with regard to the will of God is from Henry Blackleby, *Experiencing God*.

And just follow hard after him, after knowing him, and he will lead. He will lead you. I pray to God he leads you to the foreign field, because there's so much opportunity there, so many doors that have been thrown open.

It's absolutely phenomenal. Let me add this to what Paul said. Go to your church elders.

I think God has ordained that the elders of your church will have the wisdom to see you need more maturity, you need more training, or you're missing God on this. And I don't know, we seem to have had quite a few young men over the 26 years that have come and more or less said to the elders, I know what God's calling me to do, or you're going to get in line. And sort of an independent, proud spirit.

And I know that when I see it, because I've had it myself far too often. And so trust the security and the guidance of the men that God's put. Because if you go to the mission field, you ought to be sent out by church.

And those elders should be able to discern and help guide you. And there's times when we had a family that said, God called us to the mission field, we're ready to go. Well, we happened to know that this family had filed bankruptcy and owed a lot of people in town in the church.

It was very hard to start raising money for someone who hadn't paid their bills already. And so we said, you know, you need to address these things and we'll pray about this. Well, they got mad and left.

And so, you know, you want to use the God-ordained authority to give you clarity and guidance and help you to continue to mature in those areas. And that's, when I say bloom where you're planted, that's what I'm saying. If you haven't proven yourself in the local church you're in, please don't go to the mission field.

And like we say here, if you can't lead a small group at our church and God bless that, how are you going to plant churches on the farm field? And so, I feel strongly about that, having watched the young men who God's blessed and who've gone out and really hurt the cause of Christ. Here's one thing, sir. Man, if you just keep praying, if that burden is there and it's lasting, God will get you exactly where He wants you to be.

And that's what's so exciting. Everyone is so different. You know, we have this mentality, this cookie-cutter thing where you're called and you need to do this, you need to do this, you need to do this.

We really don't know what you need to do except you need to grow in maturity, as we all do. You need to follow hard after God. You need to have men around you that can be very, very godly and can give you wisdom.

And God will work it through you really well. Anything else, brothers, before we move to the next question? How would you guys respond to antinomians who say that you guys are preaching a works gospel? What I mean by that is that they say, well, you say you need to repent, you're preaching works. And what scripture verses would you specifically use? I love that question.

You see, here's the fundamental error. Here's the fundamental error. Just take Ezekiel 36, verses 22 to 24.

And what it comes down to, what they don't understand is this. Man is radically depraved. He cannot because he will not believe.

His will is in bondage because his nature is wicked. He hates God. Alright, why is repentance and faith not works? Because those are graces.

Those are fruit of regeneration. You see, in all the creeds, all the strong creeds that have been held to, regeneration precedes repentance and faith. Repentance and faith are the fruit of regeneration.

It is not a work because God is the one who's done it. He has literally changed your heart. And that is why also, that when you believe that men are radically depraved, then you don't turn your church into a six flags over Jesus to get people saved.

You realize that the only thing that's going to get them saved is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit and that occurs when a man faithfully preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ. Someone needs to add to that. I can go on forever.

I'm sorry. No, go ahead. I think somewhat of a simple answer about that to some extent is simply to say, John the Baptist came preaching repent.

Jesus came preaching repent. The Apostle Peter, the day of Pentecost when they asked him, men and brethren, what must we do? He preached repentance. Paul, Acts 17.

God's commanded all men everywhere to repent. So, if they're antinomians, then I'll be glad to be one. I mean, that's the apostolic message and method and there is no other way.

I think we have to remember too that John the Baptist, in preaching, he not only came to repent, but to bring forth works answerable to amendment of life. And Paul did the same thing. He preached to people they should turn to God and do works fit for repentance.

And then we have the Cretans are always liars, evil creatures, lazy gluttons, rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith. They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable, disobedient, unto every good work of no judgment. And then we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.

And Paul wrote to Titus and said, for those who have believed in God, tell them to be careful to maintain good works. I mean, the Bible is full of that. And if I'm a born-again believer, I better adorn the doctrine of God my Savior.

I'm supposed to do that. And the word adorn, the Greek word comes, we get the English word cosmetic from that word adorn. So, we're to make the gospel look good by the kind of life we live.

It helps. But if you're a bunch of people living in sin and you're preaching the gospel, the sinners are going to walk away. Let me add this to the young guys thinking about the ministry.

Scripture memory can be very helpful. Let me add this. In my own pilgrimage of coming out of easy believism, and again, it's kind of amazing.

I was converted at age 19 with no church background. But I was troubled by it the first time I saw it, the first invitation I saw in a church. I was saved outside the church.

And so I started attending church, and I'm just looking at this, and I'm thinking, this isn't right. So I was troubled, but I went along with it. Does that make sense to any of you guys? And really what, I mean, just nailed the nails in the coffin lid, if you will, was the glory of God is your motive in evangelism, not the need of man.

That's the issue. You have to be passionate that this God deserves great glory. He's chosen to get glory by showing the magnificence of His grace in converting unworthy, depraved sinners, and showing how powerful He is to bring them to repentance and faith when nothing else can do that.

It's an absolute miracle. And if I've got these little man-centered, the need of man is my goal, and I'm finding things you can do in your flesh to make you look like something's happened, I've dishonored God. I've not brought Him glory.

So for me, that's just a powerful issue. And by the way, it's just very biblical. Ephesians chapter 1, to the praise of the glory of His grace, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

The end of salvation is the glory of God, not the need of man being met. Back to the question about faith and works, here's one thing that's helpful. Faith, by definition, excludes works.

I mean, faith is a self-despairing look at Christ. And so by definition, works are excluded. You're giving up on yourself.

You're giving up on works when you put your trust in Christ. Another question. Hey, I just want to give God the glory for getting us here safely and for this time.

I'm so thankful for it. My question has to do with biblical courtship. I've listened to a couple of messages by you, Brother Paul, about biblical courtship.

And I know that, like my scenario, I'm in college right now, and you had said the correct thing to do would be to go to the elders of the church and have them basically define what would constitute correct biblical behavior. And the number one rule was never be alone. And my question is, when you say never be alone, does that mean never be alone without other Christians present to help keep you accountable? Or does it mean just never be alone by yourselves? Because I know two things.

I know that the world is never going to keep us accountable. They wouldn't care what we do. But I also know that in regards to dating and relationships that a lot of it comes down to are we going to seek God? I mean, that's just what it comes down to.

Are we going to be held responsible to God? So I want to know basically what you would say. Let me say this first. Paul needs to respond to this, I think.

But I have three daughters, and so I'd say you should never be alone with them without their father present. I guarantee if I'm there, it's going to be fine. Now, let me back up and say this.

What's your father? I mean, your earthly human father. Now, he may not be a believer, and that can be complicated, but something that, well, we want to keep growing and maturing in this area, but I've just watched our men mature so that they're just doing a much better job today of overseeing the courtship of their children. And there's not a lot of rules, and you can't do this and that.

It's just general maturity that goes back to just the right kind of preaching and teaching in the church that God uses His Word to mature the body, and these things start. You guys are asking these specific questions. They're part of a whole.

They're part of a healthy body. Courtship isn't courtship. It's a part of a healthy church body.

And we have a lot of things here that God's blessed. And please don't misunderstand me. We've got a long way to go in a lot of areas.

And people say, well, how does that happen? And I will say, well, so far it's taken 26 years. And I mean that. And a lot of blunders and a lot of mistakes.

And for you young preachers, I want to say this because no one was saying it to me enough. You're going to suffer. I could choke John MacArthur because I followed his ministry, and you see these successes and

these blessings and successes.

And then one time on some sermon, he just threw out this comment that his whole staff rebelled on him one time and split the church, and it was such a difficult thing. And I just wanted to shake it. Why didn't you tell me that 20 years ago? I thought I was messing up because I've been through three big splits here.

And so, you know, to develop the maturity to where these things are part of the body naturally, supernaturally naturally, take some time, some season, some suffering, or go out and plant your own church and make your own mess. It's easier to give birth than to resurrect the dead. Let me say something about courtship.

I really am afraid sometimes to use that terminology. And the reason is this. There's a lot of really wacko stuff being done in the name of courtship, and I mean messing up a lot of people.

And this super authoritarianism and a lot of things very dangerous. You know, before I became a father, I read John MacArthur's book on successful Christian parenting. He said these are the three things.

He said, you know, you've got these parents that are debating on whether or not their kids should watch the Disney Channel or this or that. He goes, let me just give you three things. Love your children unconditionally, teach them the Word of God, and discipline them consistently.

You stay in those lines, you're going to do better than probably 98% of people in the world. Same way with courtship. You know, the Bible does not, regardless of what anybody says, it does not teach a lot about courtship.

And a lot of people have put a lot of human rules and messed up children. Amen. Alright? But here are some of the things.

What is it? First of all, we know not to trust ourselves, don't we? We know that we're told to flee youthful lust. We're told to wrestle with the devil, but when it comes to youthful lust, we're told to run from it. So what does that mean? You need to realize that if you are alone with a girl, extended period of time, sooner or later something's going to happen that shouldn't happen, and you need to find a way to build parameters about that.

Also, you know this, God has put authorities in your life. Now, I'm really in disagreement with... You know, it seems we just go to extremes. Parents have no authority or parents can tell a 40-year-old man who isn't married yet what he ought to be doing.

I mean, there's these extremes everywhere. The fact is, you need to go to your parents. You need to present yourself.

If they want to drop the ball, then go to your elders, you know, and say, look, help me here. Counsel me. Some good parameters.

Things like that. If the elders drop the ball, leave the church. About being alone.

First of all, there are some rules you just don't break, but at the same time, there are some young men that I would tell, don't even be alone unless there's 600 people in the room with the girl because you're so immature. Other people, they have more maturity, more trust given to them, but at the same time, I will tell you this, you know, if you stay alone enough, unchaperoned, in a place where things can happen, they will

happen. Now, take that with wisdom and work through it, and that's the best way that I think I can help you here.

We just know that. I heard a guy one time, it was wonderful, he was mentioning about talking to his son and, you know, building some parameters around the relationship he had with a young girl, and this lady goes, what's the matter, don't you trust your son? And he goes, why no, I don't trust my son. And she goes, how can you not trust your son? Well, I don't even trust his dad.

And the point that he's making is, you know, what would happen if you saw me in some lady's house, a single lady in her forties, and I'm baking cookies with her? You'd run in there and say, Brother Paul, were you out of your mind? Alright, I got a lot more to lose in falling than you do. So if I would be out of my mind to put myself in that position for a few minutes, as a young man, you'd be certainly more out of your mind to do the same. You know, was it Paul that told Timothy to, the young men to treat the young ladies like sisters? There could be a lot of good practical principles you could develop out of that.

This is my sister, and I want her to be pure, and I want her to be, have a good reputation. How would I spend time with her? You know, it's not hard. It's not rocket surgery, as the guy said.

Brother Bob? Just to add on to what's been said, there is one option to courtship, and that is, don't do it. I mean, just trust God to engineer things to where you can know that that other person, you can know her character, you may not know her personality so well, but you can know her character, her walk with God, her response under trials, her position doctrinally, and so on. Trust God to engineer that.

The greatest sin a pastor can ever commit is to use the church to fulfill his vision. And what I'm saying is, you can get very frustrated because the sheep that are there, let's say they are sheep, they are Christians, and they're older, and they're not thinking about maybe shaking the world up like you are. Don't become angry with them.

If they are sheep, they belong to Christ, and they're to be loved, and they're to be cared for. And as long as they don't prohibit you going out and winning people to Christ. Now, another thing that you've got to realize, are you Southern Baptist? Well, there's hope for you then.

Let me share something. What is a success? I mean, what is a success? It is a man who holds true to God as he's revealed himself in Scripture. It comes down to what John MacArthur said about raising children.

There are some parents that have done a terrible, unbiblical, ungodly job, and yet their children are parents that have done a terrible job, and yet their children are missionaries in Siberia. And they think that they're going to stand before God and be blessed. They're not.

They're going to be judged. And there are parents who have tried to be biblical, and yet their children were never converted. Yet when they stand before God, they will be the success.

And it's the same way with the church. Your only responsibility is to obey Him. To obey Him.

That's it. You know, I'm reminded of Ezekiel. And he tells these false prophets who were prophesying peace and all these things.

He said, that wall you're building, it's going to fall. And when it falls, everyone's going to ask you, where's your wall? That's what's going to happen in most of this church. Listen, most churches grow because

they're entertaining carnal people.

And they've got to keep finding new ways to keep them entertained. Alright? If you start in that game, you're going to have to play that game the rest of your life. You know, if you sell yourself to that, you're going to have to do it.

If you sell yourself to the fear of men, you're going to have to do that the rest of your life. Or you sit there and go, okay, I'm going to get up in this pulpit after having studied and prayed hard, and I'm going to preach. Another thing I'd recommend as a young minister is this.

A lot of young ministers will attempt to solve all his problems in the church behind the pulpit. Don't do that. Spurgeon said that was for cowards.

You preach the Word. Just saturate that congregation in the Word and prayer and love them and go seek the lost. And after three years, if you're totally wore out doing all the right things, well, you're in a very, very good club.

I can mention several. Noah, Jeremiah, need I go on? You see, just obey the Word. And I'm sure there's pastors here who could give a bit more information than I could on that.

You know, prayer is such a key to that. We've been in quite a few years of decline here because of our convictions. We've had recent surges of growth, which has been very encouraging, quite honestly.

But I was convicted that I didn't pray believing that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. I kind of prayed hoping God would. And, you know, God uses the most unique things.

Spurgeon had a man come to him one day and he said, I'm not seeing conversions in my ministry. And Spurgeon said, do you expect God to convert somebody every time you preach? He said, well, no. He said, that's why you're not seeing any.

Well, that convicted me. And I pray boldly that this Gospel of God is going to glorify Himself by changing lives. Not my merit or my ability or my preaching style or all of our gizmos and structures, but this Gospel, the foolishness of preaching this Gospel, in the midst of error, God's going to show Himself strong and glorify Himself by vindicating His truth.

Pray believing. And get back with me. If you're already doing that, praise the Lord.

And you may be like Isaiah or Jeremiah. People look at a church this size in this area and think, well, it's real successful. We've been declining.

We've had declining years, tough years, discouraging. And that's part of the process. And I don't want to do it again.

But I needed to do it. And the other thing is, isn't it true that God rebukes us and humbles us and brings us into seasons of repentance during the difficult season? It has been so true for me. These people have a much better preaching pastor today because of the years of decline and struggle when my ego was crushed.

And God had to do those things. And I'm fearful He's not through. You know, you're not alone.

And what I mean by that is, here... You ever seen one of the kids just like to pick up stragglers everywhere? Brings every kind of dog home you can imagine. You ever seen a kid like that? That's the kind of way we are. If you're straggling out there, we would love to be your brothers in Christ.

And we would love to pray with you and help you anytime you call on the phone to do that. Because there's a lot of young guys like you. And I believe God's going to use them mightily.

And they don't need to get discouraged and sell their birthright. They're preachers. And they're men that stand before God.

And they need to stay that way. Listen, son. The only thing that matters, the only thing you have is the truth.

And the only thing you need to do with it is obey. You know all these guys telling today, well, it's the same truth. We just package it a different way.

That is a lie straight out of the pit of hell. You package it a different way, it's not the same truth. And so you learn to preach the truth.

We can give you a truckload of good books and introduce you to a lot of men. But, you know, son, the only thing that matters is on that day. And it's revealed by fire.

It's revealed by fire. You know, the largest church in Saskatoon at the time of the Revival was the Alliance Church. And they couldn't understand how God made the mistake of starting a revival in a Baptist church instead of an Alliance church.

Prior to that, the pastor of this big church, his attitude was, we've got a small church, why don't you close down and come on in with us? You're wasting your time and your money, you know. And that was the attitude he had. During the Revival, God broke him about that.

He publicly apologized for the feeling he had towards these small churches. He did a good job. He really repented over the attitude he'd had before.

Right now in a town called Selkirk, Manitoba, there's 12,000 people, quite close to Winnipeg, and some people came in and talked to all the small churches and advised them, close down, we're going to move in here and make one big church. You know what happened? The Baptist said, no. Couldn't forgive the Baptist.

Other churches went along with the idea, you know. But it was a church I started years ago. Maybe that had something to do with it, I don't know.

Laughter Anything else, brothers? We appreciate the patience of everyone and look forward to you coming tomorrow. Amen. Have you been edified tonight by this wonderful time? Amen.

Applause Please, one of the things I really want to encourage you to do is please, there are some people here that around here I've known for years. The fellowship, just, there are men out here sitting that aren't up here and yet they've forgotten more about God than I'll ever know. There are people, just enjoy the fellowship, really.

Enjoy the fellowship. Especially, there's a guy running around here that looks just like Charles Spurgeon. If you can grab a hold of him, he knows a lot about God.

All you young preachers need to talk to him, Mike Morrow. I don't know where he's at. I'd like to ask Brother Mike to lead us in prayer, to close us out.



Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/P4J6MTLnelg.mp4>
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