Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Bible Questions and Answers, Part 22
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 1301-T

We have such a wonderful church family, and God has blessed us with so many precious gifts. And every once in awhile, as I think about our church, I'm reminded of a text that came to mind this evening, and it's just a very brief word. And it says in the Third Epistle of John, Verse 4, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walked in truth." And I echo the sentiment of John the Apostle, that in terms of ministry, in terms of serving Jesus Christ, there's no greater joy than to know that your children walk in truth.

We teach you the Word of God on the Lord's Day. We teach it to you through the fellowship groups and through the Sunday school classes, and through the flocks and flagas and seminary classes and seminars and training sessions and discipleship and books and tapes, and every way we possibly can. We have perceived through the years that you are more noble than most, for you search the Scripture to see if these things are so. And that's cause for great joy.

And it comes to be a necessity in our fellowship from time to time, to allow you to respond to the teaching, and we've done this through all of the years that I've been here, periodically just giving you opportunity to ask questions. I think the last time we did it was in February. It's been quite awhile, at the conclusion of our series on the family. We had a little time for questions. We want to do that again tonight.

Now, you'll notice there are three microphones, one in the middle and then those two on the side aisles, and you can go and stand behind those microphones and we'll just move across from person to person. You will find there one of our pastors, who will go at this point, if you will, men, and he'll kind of get you organized. No more than five people at a microphone, all right? And then you can wait till someone sits down. Okay, we've got plenty of room in the middle one here, if somebody wants to come around the back or something. Great.

Now, the idea is not stump the pastor, okay? I mean, I know you can ask me things that I can't answer, but what we want to do is to deal with things that are of importance, and we'll do our best to give you an answer out of the Word of God. You know, in the book of Acts, it says Paul reasoned with them out of the Scripture. It means he dialogued with them. And one of the great teaching ways is question and answer. In fact, throughout the early years of the church, there was a developing question and answer mode in teaching. It became sort of refined into what we know as catechism, which is a series of teachings based upon the question and answer process.

So, we just encourage you to feel free to ask a question, and we'll do our best to speak right to the point. Keep your questions short. Don't give us a big, long, drawn out thing or we'll never get everybody's questions answered, all right? And we'd like you to give us your name, your first name at least, as we start, so we know who we're talking to. Okay, we'll start over to my left.

JERRY: I'm Jerry Roth, and my daughter, who's a full time student at Lagas told me today that this question has been kind of discussed by some of Lagas students, and she can't be here tonight, so she asked me if I'd ask it. She wanted to know how Christ, who was the second person of the Trinity, no beginning, could also be begotten of God.

JOHN: All right. The answer to the question, I think, is found in Hebrews Chapter 1. The question is how can Christ be the eternal God and still be begotten of God. I think that basically there's a twofold emphasis there, but you'll note that it says in Hebrews 1, "God, at sundry times and diverse manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets as in these last days, spoken unto us by His son, whom he appointed heir of all things, by who made the world," so forth. So, God has spoken by His son.

In verse 4, it says, "Of the son, he was made so much better than the angels, as he hath, by inheritance, obtained a more excellent name than they, under which the angels said He at any time, thou art my son. This day have I begotten thee, and again, I will be to Him a father and He shall be, to me, a Son. And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, He said," and it goes on.

I think the concept of Christ being begotten is not that Christ as a person was begotten, but that Christ as the incarnate one was begotten. In other words, He always existed as the second member of the Trinity. From eternity to eternity, he always existed. But He was begotten in the sense that He was born into the world, that He took on a human form and there was a beginning of an actual human being, a God man, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, it's there in verse 6, "When he bringeth in the first begotten into the world," and that has to do with the incarnation of Christ. And that, I think, is the point of his begetting, or being begotten, as it were, as a son in the human sense. Now, let me take you to step number two in that thought. I also believe that Christ is called the begotten, not only because of His incarnation, but because of His resurrection, He is called the first begotten from the dead. So that he went into the grave and came out of the grave, He is the first begotten of the dead. Not first in chronology, but first in primacy. Of all those that have been raised from the dead, He is the primary one.

So, He is begotten in the sense of His incarnation. He is begotten again from the dead in the sense of His resurrection, and that is not in any way to say that He did not eternally exist. For in John 17, He says to the Father, "I have finished the work you gave me to do. Now restore me to the glory I had

with you before the world began." And there He affirms His eternal nature.

Okay, good question. Steve.

STEVE: Hi, I'm Steve. I would like to - I feel this question needs to be asked, in the sense of clarification to which you talked two weeks ago on binding and losing whatever is bound in Heaven. I'd like to, in light of what the charismatics have done, I'd like a little example and boundaries of what we can do. It may make some examples from Scripture how we can bind something and how we can lose something, and bound in Heaven and Earth and not get way off on the tangent.

JOHN: Okay, Steve. The answer to that question is very simple. The only basis on which we can bind, and that means to forbid, or lose, and that means to permit, is if what is being permitted or what is being forbidden is clearly referred to where? In the Scripture. We have no right to go beyond the pages of Holy Scripture and bind things, or that is, permit things or forbid things.

The concept of binding and loosing was a rabbinical concept, a rabbi's - binding and loosing is an old, archaic thing. It would be permitting and forbidding in our terms, and Jesus said to the Apostles, you remember that whatever you forbid on earth shall have been forbidden in Heaven. Whatever you permit on Earth shall have been permitted in Heaven. In other words, He's simply saying when you act in agreement with the revelation of God, Heaven is acting on your behalf.

It becomes difficult, for example, in Matthew 18. Let's say you know somebody's in sin, and so you want to go to that person and you want to confront them and you say you're bound in your sin. You must repent. You must get your life cleansed. This is wrong. And then you proceed to discipline the person. You take two or three witnesses, you tell it to the whole church, and that's difficult to do because you think, well, boy, I hope I'm right about this, because I want to put this guy's name out through the whole church, right? You want to be sure you're right. You want to be sure you have the permission to do this.

Some people say, "Don't do that. It's not loving to do that. Oh, my, don't do that." Just accept them. In fact, somebody said to me a couple of weeks ago at the - I guess only a week ago, at the radio conference. We have people in our church who have gotten divorced, they're remarried other people, and the whole time they've stayed in the church, and the divorce was un-Biblical and the remarriages were all un-Biblical, but the church feels the best thing to do is say nothing, because they don't want to ruin the reputation of the people, make things hard for them, et cetera, et cetera.

And so, there is that natural tension, and that's why the Bible says that when you pursue the matter of discipline, you should do so knowing you have the right to permit certain things and the right to forbid certain things, because if they have been revealed as such in the Bible, Heaven has already done it anyway and you're only acting in accord with Heaven.

So, the limit on that, Steve, is the limit of the authority of the Word of God. Now, the charismatic people, many of them have gone to the point where they talk a lot about binding Satan. Now, that's not in the Bible at all. That's just totally foreign to Scripture. There's no such thing as binding Satan in the Bible. You can't, frankly, permit Satan to do anything or forbid him to do anything. He is a free individual, within his own boundaries to do whatever he chooses to do, within the confines of God's limitation. The only freedom you have is to respond or not respond. But you can't control Satan. You can't say, "Satan, you can't come here. Satan, you can't go there, you can't do this." You're not God. You don't control Satan. But you do control your responses to him by the power of the Holy Spirit.

So, binding and loosing has really been kind of pushed beyond its Biblical parameters in that sense. Yes?

MARK: Yes, my name is Mark Sherman, and I would like to ask you a personal question, if I may.

JOHN: Sure.

MARK: In characterizing your own life, what kind of a man do you think you are? [Laughter]

JOHN: Well, that's a fair question. 6'1 ½, 195, human being like all other.

MARK: If the question's too general, then I - you don't need to answer it.

JOHN: No, I'll answer -

MARK: It's pretty general.

JOHN: Yeah. I'll answer it. Let's see. In terms of the physical, you can see what I am. We'll get on with that, something else. In terms of the mental capacities, I have certain limitations, but I learned a long time ago to work hard. In terms of spiritual qualifications, I see myself as a sinner saved by the grace of God. I see myself as one, who if it weren't for Jesus Christ's sovereign love in my behalf, I would spend forever in Hell. I see myself as a person with no merit to commend myself to God. He has saved me, and I thank Him for that. He has called me into in the ministry. Again, it's just as gracious as was my redemption, so I have no right to be here on my own, any more than I have a right to be saved. And so I'm as thankful to God for this as I am for my salvation.

I see myself also as a person who's totally committed, basically, to the knowledge and understanding of the God who has written this word. And so, I've committed my life to study His Word. That's the spiritual dimension. That doesn't mean I don't sin. That doesn't mean I don't fail. It doesn't mean I'm better than anybody else. That's not the case. It's just that I have a unique calling.

In reference to this church, I see myself as given the spiritual responsibility to work with a group of men, particularly in leadership here, the elders of the church. I see myself as a leader among those men, by the grace of God. Maybe that kind of gives you sort of a rounded thing. I see myself also as a husband and a father, and that is a tremendously important thing to me. I have a great, great love for my wife and my children. I am bound to them in my heart totally. I have a great love for other people who are friends. I see myself as a human being like everybody else, except God's put me in this very difficult place, and I've asked Him to give me the grace to be able to handle the things He's given me to do. When I fail, it makes me more dependent on Him. Okay?

MARK: Thank you.

[Applause]

JOHN: Does that mean I can stay? [Laughter] Over here.

IRV: I'm Irv Olson, and the Scripture I'd like to have explained. It's 1 Peter 3:21, the part where it says, "In corresponding to that, baptism now saves you. Not the removal of dirt from flesh, but the appeal to God for a good conscious."

JOHN: Right. What that verse is saying is that - Peter's just talked about - we're talking about 1 Peter 3:18, "Christ has once suffered for sins. The just for the unjust, it might bring us to God," and so forth. And it talks about there, Christ's provision of salvation. And then it says that when His body was on the cross, dead, His spirit was alive. Not the Holy Spirit there in verse 18, but His spirit. And He went and preached to the spirits in prison, and I believe these were demon beings and the word preach is not to preach the Gospel, you want galindso, but haruso to proclaim the triumph.

I believe that when He was dying on the cross, this is a marvelous truth. When He was dying on the cross, it looked to Hell and the demons like perhaps they had won the victory. And so, at the very moment when His body was dead, during that period of time, His spirit was alive, it says in verse 18. And He went right down into the prison where the spirits are kept. And you want to know what spirits they were, verse 20 says, "They were the ones disobedient during the time of Noah." And you remember, in those days, the time of Noah, God sent the flood because the sons of God commingled with the daughters of men, so they were spirit beings who cohabitated with women, creating a sort of Rosemary Baby race of people, and God destroyed them all in the flood.

So, these are demon spirits. That's all you really need to know. He went into the place, proclaimed triumph over the demon spirits, even in the midst of His death. And then it talks about the ark, in which people were saved by water. The ark, then, becomes a symbol. And in verse 21, "The like figure under which even baptism doth also now save us, but it is not the putting away the filth of the

flesh." In other words, He is saying that as that ark was saved in water, so are we saved in water. But it is not external water. See that? It's not the water that washes the flesh, the physical body. Not that at all. But it is that purification of the conscience, it is the purification of the conscience that He's really referring to. In other words, it's symbolic. As the ship was saved by the water, it floated on the water. The water wasn't salvation.

So, we are saved by a certain kind of being in water. But it is not the water of the physical baptism. What water is it? Titus 3:5 tells us, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us," here it comes, "By the washing of regeneration." Okay? It's that washing of the heart.

Now, you go back with Peter, and you go back with Paul to a Jewish concept that really starts in the New Testament with Nicodemus, doesn't it? Jesus says, "You must be born of," what? "Water." John 3. Spirit. Now, what water was that? Well, what would Nicodemus understand? Nicodemus was a Jew. He was the teacher in Israel. He was an erudite scholar of the Old Testament, and he would know that back in Ezekiel's prophecy, in chapter 36, Ezekiel said, "Someday, God is going to come in a unique way, and He is going to wash you with clean water. "Take out the stony heart of flesh and give you a heart of flesh, and put His spirit within you."

So, Nicodemus knew that some day, the Messiah would come, and He would do a washing work in the heart and plant the spirit. That's the water and the spirit of John 3. And so, water, which always in the Old Testament, outward cleansing symbolized inward cleansing, always does the same in the New. So, the ark, then, becomes a figure of being saved through a water, and that water is not an external baptism. This verse in Peter argues against baptismal regeneration, but rather, a washing of the heart through the working of God and forgiveness through Christ. Okay?

IRV: Thank you.

JOHN: Good question. Yes?

MALE VOICE: My question is, did God establish salvation on the basis of faith because of Adam and Eve's lack of faith?

JOHN: Did God establish salvation on the basis of faith because of Adam and Eve's lack of faith? No, I don't think so. Now you're into a very difficult area of theology, which is known as lapsarianism, right? Sub-lapsarianism, supra-lapsarianism, or infra-lapsarianism. Does that bless your heart? [Laughter] And what it basically means is, you're really asking the question, did God establish salvation because of what Adam and Eve did, or did God establish salvation before Adam and Eve did anything, and what did God establish first, and what is the sequence and what is the order, and the answer to all of that is I don't know. But some people are sub-lapsarians, some people are infra-

lapsarians. Some people are supra-lapsarian, and then there are Labrador Retrievers, and I really don't - [Laughter] I'm really not able to tell you what God did first.

So, I tend to say that God didn't do anything as a reaction to what men did. I believe that the reason God has given us salvation by faith, just simply, is because it most exalts Him. Because it eliminates anything that we might do, right? Okay.

MALE VOICE: This next question is on salvation as well. Do you want to take it in order?

JOHN: Sure, sure.

ALAN: Hi, my name is Alan Gordon, and I just moved here from Florida. And before I moved, a lot of people said that if I came to this church, that they believed in election. And I don't understand it completely, and I'd like to get it cleared up, because so far, what I do understand, it seems right.

JOHN: Okay. Welcome, we're glad to have you here from Florida. God bless you. Thanks for coming. Election, well, this is easy. Let's see. [Laughter] In other words, what people always ask, and I'll frame the question for you, Al. Are we chosen to be saved, or do we choose ourselves to be saved, right?

ALAN: Right.

JOHN: Did I come to Jesus Christ because I was irresistibly drawn by God and had nothing to do with it, or did I come to Christ because my heart said, "I want to come to Christ." And the answer is yes. [Laughter] Isn't that simple? Now, let me see if I can explain it to you simply, okay? The Bible teaches election. It uses that word many times. It says we elect accordingly to the foreknowledge of God. It says we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. It says our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life and before the foundation of the world. It says, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you." In the book of Acts, it says that God said, "I have much people in that city." People that weren't even saved yet, but He had His name on them to be saved.

You cannot deny election. Ephesians 1, "Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world." We know we are elect, so when you come to a passage on election, you preach it with all your heart. You just preach it. It's there, you can't argue with it. We're elect, chosen by God. Nobody ever came to Jesus Christ except the Father and did what? Draw Him. So, we are saved because of God's pre-determined love and that's it. I mean, we are elect of God, and what a marvelous thing it is. And that's so important, the doctrine of security, because if He elects us, He's gonna hold us, right?

All right. So we teach that, and we preach that, and when you come across a passage on election, you just preach it fully and completely, because that's what the Bible teaches. But the Bible also teaches human volition. Jesus said, "You will not come to me that you might have life." Jesus said, "O

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft I would have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her brood, and you would not." In other words, Jesus on the one hand said, "You can't come to me unless the Father draws you," and on the other hand, if you don't come, you're to be blamed.

Now, in our minds, those seem like opposites, don't they? Paradoxes, unresolvable. And they really are. Over here, if you're saved, it's by God's election, and over here, if you're damned, it's your own choice. Now, let me tell you something. That shouldn't be a problem for you because of this. God's mind is greater than our mind, right? If I could understand everything, I'd be God, and if I was God, the world would really be in bad shape. [Laughter] But man loves to think he's God. He wants everything to fit into his mind, so what he does is take those kinds of things and try to find a truth in the middle that accommodates both, and in the end, he destroys both.

And so, you come up with this thing where, well, you see God looks down at the world and He says, "Uh huh, I see the way they're going. I know what's going to happen. Boy, they're going to go over there and slide, just won't elect them, cause I can see that." And so, God becomes the victim of the things that men do. That isn't what the Bible teaches. If you deny election, you've denied something in the Bible. If you deny the choice of men, where it says, "Whosoever will, let him come. Taketh the water of life freely." Revelations 22. You can't deny either one. You leave them there and if you try to harmonize them in the middle, you've destroyed both of them. See, just leave them there.

You say, "But I don't understand." That's good. You know what that proves? You're not God, and that makes us all very comfortable. [Laughter] And I'll tell you another thing. There is - John Murray, the theologian at Westminster Seminary says there is an apparent paradox in every Biblical doctrine, every major Biblical doctrine. For example, I'll ask you a simple question. Who wrote Romans? Who wrote Romans? Paul? God? Holy Spirit? Who? Did Paul write a verse and then God write a verse, then Paul write a verse, then God write a verse? You say, "Was it all the Holy Spirit? Is every word in Romans from the mind of the Holy Spirit?" Yes. Is every word in Romans from the mind of the Apostle Paul and his heart and his vocabulary? Yes. Who wrote it? Well, it's all God, and it's all Paul. Well, how can it be all God and all Paul? Well, it can't be in our human thinking. That's paradoxical. But it is.

Let me ask you this. Was Jesus God or man? Yes. [Laughter] Half God, half man? What's half a man? What's half a God? Nothing. He was 100 percent God, 100 percent man. You can't be that. That's right. It's paradoxical. But if you try to make it in the middle and mix it and take away a little of His deity and a little of His humanity to come up with a hybrid, what have you just done? You've destroyed the person of Jesus Christ. So you leave it alone and you say to yourself, "I can't know that. The secret things belong to the Lord," Deuteronomy 29:29. I will not play God and assume that everything has to fit into my computer to be true.

I'll ask you another question. Who lives your Christian life? Who does? Do you? Are you out there saying, "I'm going to live my Christian life if it kills it me." [Laughter] Do you say, "No, it's Christ in me. I don't do anything. I just flop, but He does it all." No, no. I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live. Yet, not I. [Laughter] But Christ lives. See, same paradox. See, whenever you try to reduce the truth of God down to the human brain, you're gonna have some stuff left over. Understand that?

And consequently, you've got to be able to allow for what we call Divine Tension. Just leave it there. God will teach us election. God will teach us human choice. Let it teach both. God understands how it all goes together. We don't. That's a matter of faith, isn't it? He'll come up with something, in the middle, you destroy both. So, people who want to say, "Oh, we can't believe in election cause it messes us up on this end," are really doing what they have no right to do. They're saying, "We've got to reduce God to our own thinking processes and assume He's going to do only the things that we can fully understand." And that's not so. Okay? Good.

MALE VOICE: John, concerning last week's teaching on the illumination of the spirit of the Scriptures. How is it that - how do we understand that so many spirit filled and studious men come up with so many different documents about -

JOHN: Yeah, that's a good question. Why is it that good men disagree, right? If it's the spirit of God as our teacher. Okay, let me tell you, and this is hard to, you know, to clarify in a simple way, but look at this. We're all going to be wrong somewhere, because we lack perfection. True? I know I have errors in my theology. I just don't know where they are. If I knew where they were, I'd change them. [Laughter] I'm working real hard and I believe everything I say. I really do, and I preach it that way. Don't you get the idea that I really believe what I say?

Now, I know that I'm imperfect, and so I, to start with, no one person is the repository of all divine truth. And I say that to say this, that all of us are made, to some extent, incapacitated because of our humanness. And so, there will be times, for example, when we're working on a passage, when we're interpreting a passage, that it'll go into our permanent file and we've done less than adequate scholarship on that passage. And so, that part of what we've done may not be truly representative of what that text teaches. So, you're dealing, one, with the human element.

Secondly, the reason there's disagreement is because of background and pre-suppositions. In other words, men are raised in a certain environment with certain definitions and parameters in life and certain pre-suppositions. The hardest thing in Bible study is to divorce yourself from all your pre-suppositions and take every text purely on its own merit. We tend to go into the text with all of our preconceived ideas and then fit this thing into the system that's already been developed, rather than to keep the system open enough to take what that thing said.

Thirdly, I think there's a very important reason why good men don't agree, and that's because many good men don't really dig deep enough, and they're too superficial. And if they really were faithful, to dig with great diligence, they'd find themselves coming together much more than they do. And that's important.

The fourth reason that good men don't agree is because some texts are obscure and difficult to interpret. And since you can't really be utterly, absolutely, dogmatic about them, there is room for latitude at that point. But the thing that is so wonderful in all of this is that those who are those, who represent the Word of God and who believe the Word of God, and who teach the Word of God as the Word of God, and love the Lord Jesus Christ, will have differences, but they will inevitably be peripheral differences. The core of the main line of God's revealed truth will be there, see?

And the differences will come through their background, through their scholarship, adequate or inadequate, through their pre-suppositions, through their diligence or lack of it, through the fact that this text doesn't have enough information for us to really know. For example, we're talking about the Baptism for the Dead, in 1 Corinthians 11 - or rather, 1 Corinthians 15. But I think that good men basically agree right down the line.

I stand in a historic contents. I'm basically teaching you what has been the main line doctrine of the church since Jesus Christ, and I haven't deviated from that. There may be some passages where I'll go off a little bit, here and there from somebody else's teaching, but the heart and soul of the message and the Word of God is intact. And the other reasons that I give you will explain why those variations appear.

Really, what we need to do is work harder and get rid of our pre-set pre-suppositions. That really helps. Yes?
MALE VOICE: Well, we've all heard the Scripture, "He who will not work mustn't eat." What about, in a godly family, where there is single people living together, like apartment dwelling, and one of them is working full time and the other is going to school full time. Is it permissible, is it godly to, for one to support the other?

JOHN: Well, I don't have any problem with that.

MALE VOICE: Okay.

JOHN: I think if two friends determine that one is going to go to school and one will support that one, that is to say we want this person who's going to school ultimately to be able to accomplish the training in school that will permit them to spend the rest of their life earning a living.

MALE VOICE: Amen. Thank you.

JOHN: Okay. I mean, I've got to say that. My wife put me through my last year of seminary. [Laughter] Sure, that's - what the text is talking about there is that a man who utterly fails to provide for his family, who just doesn't provide for them. That's unacceptable, and if he doesn't work, he doesn't eat. And of course, Thessalonians there, it's talking about busybodies and so forth, deadbeats, panhandlers. Not those people that have a goal and a view in mind to help one another. Yes?

TOM: My name is Tom Drake. I've never really understood the passage in Luke 5, 36:39, about the new wine and the old bottles, so I'd like some explanation.

JOHN: Okay. Luke 5, 36. "He spoke also a parable to them. No man puts a piece of new garment on an old. If so, then both the new makes a tear and the piece that was torn out of new agreeth not with the old. No man puts new wine into old wine skins, thus the new wine will burst the wine skins, be spilled, the wine skins perish. New wine must be put in new wine skins, and both the preserved," and so forth. Okay. What it's saying is, and you ladies will know about this. You get an old piece of garment, you put a new patch in it, and it'll rip the old up, won't it? Can't put a new patch in an old garment.

You get an old wine skin that's had wine in it for a long time, in those days, in that culture. We don't do things like that anymore, but what would happen is, once it was emptied, it would sit and it would dry and crack. If you then poured liquid into it, what would happen? Well, it would leak. You have to have a new, supple, soft wine skin to handle that. And I think this is so important because now, I also did a tape on that, Tom, in Matthew 9, by the way, cause its parallel is there.

But what Jesus is saying is so vital. He says when He came into the world, He is saying, "Look, I am not here as an addendum to Judaism. I am not here to put some new wine in old wine skins. I am here with a new covenant." And I think He's representing His ministry not as something that in any way in the Earth, can fit into Pharisee Judaism, as it existed in the land of Israel. That's really what He's saying. There's no way that I can accommodate the system that is, and He was really calling men to come out totally from that self-righteous, legalistic, work-centered system that was Judaism. He wasn't accommodating Himself to that in any way, shape, or form. What He brought was something new, and it had to come in a new package, didn't it? It couldn't be contained by that old, self-righteous works system. That's the essence of what He's saying, I think, in that parable. Yes?

DAN: My name is Dan Gallagher, and I was - I have a question that's been rocking my mind for awhile. And that is, did the prayer of Moses on behalf of the people in Exodus 32 change the mind of an omniscient, sovereign, immutable God?

JOHN: No. No, it didn't change His mind. What you have to understand in the Scripture is that God relates to us in human terms, okay? In other words, when it says, "It repented God, that He made man," did God really repent? No, but we understand that. That that means that on the surface, it appears as though God was sorry about something that He had done. He felt sorry that He even made man. What that means is that God is not ipso facto, saying, "I'm sorry I made man," like He did something wrong. But He's relating to us in a human emotion that helps us identify with what God was feeling when He saw people turning their back on Him. Okay?

Now, when Moses prays to God on Israel's behalf, or to spare the people, you know, if there's just a few righteous. Abraham did the same thing, you remember, in Sodom and Gomorrah. The same kind of thing, if you can just find a few, will you spare them, and so forth and so on? God is not changing His mind. God is not altering His behavior. God is not changing the plan. But from the human viewpoint, prayer appears to have that effect on God. And so, God talks to us in those human terms, so that we can perceive that that can be understood that way.

For example, the Bible says, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the Earth." Does God have eyes? No. But if it said God uses His glips to fricase, we don't know what that is. But if it says He uses His eyes to see, we perceive, then, that He is able to take in information. Or it says, "The arm of the Lord is not shortened." It can't heal, He doesn't have arms. It says, "His ear is not deaf that He does not hear." In fact, it even says that He covers us with His feathers. It doesn't mean that God is a chicken or a duck or whatever. [Laughter]

But God reduces Himself, and this is very important. It's what called an anthropomorphism. That comes from two Greek words. Anthropos, man, morphe, body. Terms of the body of a man. God reveals Himself to us in terms that are understood in human life, so that we can perceive what is happening from the only vantage point that we could ever perceive it. And that's on human terms. So, it's not to say that God changes His mind or alters His position or alters His view. It is to say that it appears that way from the human viewpoint.

For example, and any time you pray, let's say a sequence is going on, and you pray, and the Lord heals somebody. Did God change His mind? Would God have healed the person anyway? That's a very difficult question, because the will of God ultimately was to heal the person, so whether you prayed or not, what would God have done? Healed the person, except for the fact that your praying was part of the process for God to heal the person. So, that was in the plan too. Very difficult. Now you're trying to unscrew the unscrutable.

DAN: So, when God told Moses that, "I will destroy these people," even if Moses had not prayed, God would not have destroyed the people?

JOHN: No, because, you know, you can't say if he hadn't prayed, because he did pray. In other words, God is talking to Moses in human terms, to draw him to pray for the people. That's part of the plan. God knew what He would do in the end. But again, God is reducing Himself to a conversation perceivable to the human mind. It's the only way we can understand God. Okay? And, Dan, I grant you, it leaves some tough areas out there. But someday, we'll know as we're known, right?
ROBERT: Hi, John. My name is Robert Singer, and I have a question about Christians relating to government. In a situation where you're living under a government which is atheistic, humanistic, and is actively persecuting Christians, at what point can a Christian begin to resist that government? Is there any Biblical justification for a Christian to passively resist in the case of just not cooperating? Or actively resisting, in the case of taking up arms against a government? Also, what would be your modus op - modus - how would you operate - [Laughter] make it simple. How would you operate if you were a pastor in the Soviet Union?

JOHN: Well, that's a fair question. I'm not, Lord knows. I'm here because He wants me here. I don't know whether I'd survive that. But let me just say this. Shocking as it may seem, the powers that be are ordained of God, Romans 13. "The powers that be are ordained of God." Now, that doesn't qualify them ethically, does it? Okay. So, "I believe we are to be subject to the King," 1 Peter 3, "The government to those in power." 1 Peter 2, rather. "To the people in power, the government, the authorities," so forth, so forth, so forth. "The police bear not the sword in vain," Romans 13.

I believe we have to take a role of servitude, a role of submission to the government. Therefore, the only ways in which we can react against that government are ways provided within that government to react. And it is not our alternative to react politically or economically or materialistically or philosophically. The only liberty given to a Christian in a framework of government is to react against a system, religiously or spiritually, so that we would have no basis to take up arms against a government, as I see it. We could choose passively to resist, based on religious or spiritual conviction, and in doing so, we would need, then, to accept the inevitable consequence.

And the classic text on that is Acts 4 and 5, because Peter is drawn into the Sanhedrin. They were in a hostile government, right? They never took arms against the government. They tried to make Jesus do that. He never would do that. They tried to force Him to take over, knock off the Romans, get rid of the Herody and set up the Kingdom. He never did that. He never spoke against slavery. Not only did He not speak against slavery, He used a slave all through the New Testament as a model of what a Christian ought to be.

So, He never tried to eliminate social injustice. What He did do was speak the truth in the midst of a hostile society and take what came. And it comes to that in Acts, when Peter preaches, and then he is called before the Sanhedrin, and they tell him, "Look, be quiet. You're filling Jerusalem with your doctrine. We won't hear any more of it." And he simply says to the them, "You judge whether we ought to obey God or man."

I believe the only time we have a right to violate the laws of the land in which we live is when we have clearly revealed in Scripture a higher law given by God and in so doing, we then take the consequence for that behavior. Okay? Now, let me say it a step further. That means that we are not politically oriented. We are not, even if our government is atheistic, and it kind of works out that way, even in the United States, and humanistic, and it sure is, and materialistic. It is not ours to fight against the government. It is ours to realize that our only weapons, Paul says, are not what? Carnal, but what? Spiritual. So, the pulling down of strongholds.

The weapon of the church is not voting. Do you know that? It is not voting. That's a citizens' issue. The weapons of the church are the Word of God, and changed lives, and spiritual power. And that's what we need to use, okay?

ROBERT: So, if you were a pastor in Russia, you'd just preach the word and take what comes?

JOHN: That's it, and take the consequences.

ROBERT: Thank you.

JOHN: You've got it.

MICHAEL: Hi, John. My name is Michael White, and my question has to do with Deuteronomy 24, 1:2:4.

JOHN: Right.

MICHAEL: Which speaks of divorce. And if I may paraphrase that, it says there that if a man divorces his wife, and if that wife remarries, and then subsequently is divorced from the second husband or is widowed, that the first husband cannot take her back as his wife. Does that law still apply to this day and age?

JOHN: I believe it does, and I believe the reason it does is this. Now, you're asking a question relative to Old Testament interpretive principles. How do we know what, in the Old Testament, is for today and what is not? For example, two chapters earlier, you have a law that says you're forbidden to take birds' eggs out of their nests. Are we still forbidden to do that? How do we know this law is in and that one's out? The answer is this, and this is the best we can do with it.

First of all, if an Old Testament principle is repeated in the New, we know it's clearly for today, right? Secondly, if it reflects a moral issue, God's morality never changes. There are certain ceremonies and certain rituals and certain customs and traditions which God gave to the nation of Israel to set them apart, uniquely, which obviously are obviated in the New Testament, such as dietary laws and so

forth. Acts, Chapter 10, Colossians 2, so forth. But if you're dealing, first of all, with something repeated in the New Testament, or something that is a moral issue.

Thirdly, I believe that one of the ways we need to deal with the Old Testament is, are we dealing with something that is bigger than Israel? Bigger than that one period of time? And in this case, I think we are, because we're dealing with marriage and marriage is supra-Israel. It is bigger than Israel. And so, you're dealing with a topic that stretches from the creation of man to the beginning of the new Heaven and the new Earth. And marriage will flow through all of the history of mankind. And when God comments on marriage, I think it becomes binding because the territory covered by marriage is so vast.

So, I believe here, when a person puts away his wife without cause, without Biblical grounds, he then causes her to become an adulteress, who marries her, becomes an adulterer, and she is an adulteress. And being an adulteress is defiled, and he can't take her back because he can't marry a defiled person, okay?

MICHAEL: What if there were grounds for divorce?

JOHN: It's the same, I think. You have to sort of stand on the same ground. It's a difficult question. It doesn't deal with that, but I think if I were being confronted in a counseling situation and someone said, "I had grounds for divorce. I divorced my wife. She went away, she remarried somebody else. She divorced that person and came back to me." Although I can't use the Scripture, I would say that's a very tenuous thing. I don't think adultery is the issue here. If there was real grounds for divorce, the Bible doesn't comment on such a situation.

So, you don't have the Biblical comment. But my own thinking, and I'm going to offer this only as a result of Biblical thinking. This is my thinking as a result of what I know about Scripture. If there was that kind of law that you could divorce your wife with grounds, or your husband, go and marry again, and then they could come back to you, it would cultivate a myriad more problems than it would solve, by giving people options. When God, if you've already entered into another relationship, would best want you to stay and make the most out of it. Even if it wasn't the first choice, it's better than the third choice. You understand what I'm saying?

MICHAEL: Yes.

JOHN: Yeah. So, the Bible doesn't talk about every specific, because basically, God hates divorce and you just don't do it to start with. And if you do it, then you're dealing with the exceptions, and all of them can't possibly be covered. Now, when you don't have a specific Scripture to deal with something, that's where the ministry of the spirit of God takes place in the heart. And you seek wise counsel, prayerfully talking with those who are mature in Jesus Christ, seeking to know the will of the

spirit of God, as he prompts your heart, and walk in obedience to that and revealed will in the providence of God in the direction of your own heart. Okay?

MICHAEL: Thank you.

KEVIN: Hi, I'm Kevin Larson, and my question is did God die on the cross, or did just the humanness of Christ die? And if no, then what was the purpose of the incarnation?

JOHN: Did God die on the cross? For a moment, we have to say yes, because Jesus died on the cross, and Jesus was God. And death basically means what?

KEVIN: Separation from Him.

JOHN: Separation from God. Was Jesus separated from God?

KEVIN: Yeah.

JOHN: "My God, my God, why hast thou," what? Forsaken me. He was separated from God. He died. And the Bible says He died over and over and over and over and over, doesn't it?

KEVIN: Yeah.

JOHN: He died, he died, he died. And He was Jesus Christ. You can't separate Jesus Christ, humanist, from His deity. You can't cut him up. He was Jesus Christ, the God man, and He died. So, yes, God died on the cross. Now, how do you separate one member of the Trinity from the rest? I don't know, but I don't really worry about it, because if God expected me to know it, He'd have told me or given me the ability to think it through. And I haven't. All I know is He did die on the cross. He was separated from the Father and yet one with the Father, and I don't understand that, and I'm not gonna be worried about not understanding it. It isn't God's problem, it's mine. I just don't have what it takes.

KEVIN: But it's important to know that God did die on the cross, right?

JOHN: Well, of course.

KEVIN: Yeah.

JOHN: Otherwise, all you've got is a human sacrifice, a human martyr, up there. The weight of sin of all of the sins of all the world killed Jesus Christ.

KEVIN: Mm hmm. So, the death of just the humanist of Christ would not have atoned for all the sins of the world?

JOHN: There is nothing about Jesus that you can separate out and talk only of His humanness. He was a whole person.

KEVIN: Yeah, well, this is - I'm in Lagas, and this has been a debate throughout the thing, and so -

JOHN: I could tell by your sweatshirt. [Laughter]

KEVIN: Get that clarified, cause a lot of people said that He did die, just His humanness, and I said -

JOHN: No. But, you see, His spirit isn't dead. Because when His body is dead on the cross, as we saw earlier, His spirit descends and proclaims a victory over the demons. So, yes, He died, but not - but remember, now, this is not our definition, necessarily, or our perception. But surely, He died. It says He died.

KEVIN: Mm hmm.

JOHN: And He was separated from the Father. Okay?

KEVIN: Yep.

JOHN: Good.

SALLY: Hi, John. My name is Sally Saccaro, and I would like to know when it's okay for a Christian to tell a lie. [Laughter] For example, you know, like Korian Tienvum, an underground church, an underground police officer. Just when is it okay?

JOHN: Well, let me give you a very straightforward answer. Never. It's never okay to tell a lie. There may be some circumstances, and I don't know what circumstances they might be, but there may be some circumstances where you don't necessarily have to say everything that could be said.

SALLY: That's loopholes.

JOHN: Pardon?

SALLY: That's loopholes.

JOHN: By who's definition? [Laughter]

SALLY: My kids do it all the time. [Laughter]

JOHN: Well, for example - oh, I see what you're doing. [Laughter] I mean, you know, if I walk up to a person and I'm introduced, and they have a funny nose, I don't have to say, "Oh, you have a funny nose." [Laughter] You say, "Well, that's the truth." Well, but you don't have to say everything, and I think there may be times where, for the protection of others, for the care of others, we don't have to say everything. But I personally believe that God tells us to speak the truth, and I would rather speak the truth and leave the consequences in His care. And the classic illustration I would use is David. David wanted to get out. He was in the enemy's palace, the Philistines, and he wanted to get out of there. And so, he decided in order to get out of there, he'd have to act like he was nuts, insane. Remember that?

So, he started to spit and slabber all over his beard, and do strange, I don't know what all he did, but he scratched on the walls and drooled in his beard. And they said, "Man, we've got enough nuts in the palace without one from down there. Get rid of the guy." And so, he lied about his sanity, and they threw him out. He went into a cave and he wrote a Psalm, and the Psalm was all about what a fool he was, because he didn't trust God. I think we have to trust God.

SALLY: What about an underground officer?

JOHN: Pardon?

SALLY: An underground police officer?

JOHN: Well, that's something that might now - again, you're coming back to whether he has to say everything. You know, that's a question that he would have to answer in his own mind, whether or not he can play a role, whether or not he can be a decoy. That has ramifications and I think it's up to individual conscience. Bob Vernon and I have talked a lot about that, and that becomes a matter of individual conscience as to how much of a role you can play in a certain situation. Okay?

IVAN: Hi, my name is Ivan Chain, and lucky for you, I can only ask one question. Since people can be saved only through Christ, how did the Old Testament saints get saved?

JOHN: Through Christ. Through Jesus Christ.

IVAN: But Christ didn't die until after they died.

JOHN: Oh, you mean what did they have to do at the moment to be saved?

IVAN: Yeah.

JOHN: Okay. Everyone is saved through Christ. He died for the sins of the world. For them, it was future, for us, it's past, but it was still through Christ, right? It was His death, His sacrifice that atoned for the sins of the Old Testament saints as well as the new. And every time they sacrificed a lamb, and every time they sacrificed a ram, and every time they sacrificed a turtle dove or a pigeon, every time they sacrificed any animal, it was a picture of Christ, a picture of Christ, a picture of Christ. So, they had to know that there was coming one who would pay the penalty for their sins. One ultimate sacrifice.

Christ alone can save. Now, the means for salvation has always been the same. Faith. And at any given point in the unfolding revelation of the Word of God, salvation came through faith, believing God. Abraham believed God. It was counted in for righteousness. What did he believe? He believed as much as God had revealed, and God had revealed even by that time that he was a sinner and that the only savior was God, and that God would pay the penalty for his sin.

Now, he didn't understand all there was to know about Jesus Christ, but he understood enough to know that he was a sinner and needed a savior, and God would provide a savior. That's why it says in Hebrews, chapter 12, that Moses could foresee Christ. Even Moses. So, I believe the Old Testament people were saved by faith in God. They believed God's Word as much as was revealed to them, and knew their own sinfulness. In fact, the reason they would carry out the sacrifices and the reason they would do all the things God told them to do was an outworking of an inward faith. It wasn't to earn salvation, it was to demonstrate the reality of it. They were saved by faith in Christ, okay? They didn't know who Christ was, and they didn't know specifically when and how and all of that. But they believed that God, they were sinful and God would have to provide a sacrifice for them.

IVAN: But I heard it said that when Christ died, the three days where He was in the tomb, He went down to Hades to preach to them, or something.

JOHN: Well, He went down and proclaimed His victory over the demons, and there are many who believe, according to Ephesians, Chapter 4, that at the same time, it says, "He led captivity captive." And there are people who believe, and it may well be, that He also went into the sheol, or the grave, where the Old Testament's saints' spirits were waiting, and He gathered them and took them to glory, because they couldn't really enter into the fullness of all of that salvation until He had paid the price for their sin. So, they're sort of in a holding place till that time.

IVAN: Okay. Thank you.

JOHN: Yes.

DEBBIE: Hi, John. My name is Debbie. Today, how are we, as Christians, to view dreams and astrology?

JOHN: Dreams and what?

DEBBIE: Astrology.

JOHN: Oh, astrology. [Laughter] That stuff is out of the pit, astrology. It's satanic stuff, and what it has with it is the power of suggestion. People who believe that shape their lives around it. It doesn't do anything to them. They conform to it. You know, they begin to conform to it. It's the power of suggestion to change their life. But it's Satanic. Of course, it's astronomically inaccurate. I mean, the cycles that they talk about are already been true, in terms of astronomy. The whole system is faulty. It doesn't work the way they claim it does to begin with. But it's a satanic way to suggest, so that the demons can have power and control of human behavior. There's a lot written on that, too, and you might want to read some of the books that we have in the bookstore, relative to that subject. I've spoken to it on several occasions.

As far as dreams are concerned, I think basically, God is not, today, revealing things in dreams, as He might have in the Old Testament, when they were in a revelatory period, and He was unfolding His Word. We have what we need in the Word of God. Dreams are simply subconscious thoughts that reach the conscious level when you're asleep, to some extent. Usually, dreams are a projection of fears or anxieties, tensions, hopes, ambitions, or whatever. But I don't see dreams as the vehicle for God to reveal His truth to us.

Now, it may be that you're gonna have a dream that is connected to Scripture, because you've been studying it. It may be that the spirit of God might even prompt you to think a certain way in a dream. I know some people have had very fearful dreams, and it's driven them to know Christ. So, the Lord may use those kinds of things, but I don't see them as a vehicle of His revelation.

DEBBIE: Thank you. Might you view astrology as worshipping the creation, rather than the creator, as in Romans 1?

JOHN: That's exactly part of it, sure.

DEBBIE: Okay.

JOHN: Sure.

DEBBIE: Thank you.

JOHN: Yes?

JIM: Hi, my name is Jim, and I'd like you to explain, as thoroughly as you can, the unforgettable sin of blasphemy in the Holy Spirit. Just exactly what it is and how it affects a Christian and non-Christian life.

JOHN: Sure. In Matthew, Chapter 12, we have the unpardonable sin, and Jesus says - well, Jesus cast out some demons and they said He does what He does by the power of the Prince of Demons, the Lord of Flies, Beelzebub. And He said, you know, everything can be forgiven, you. A sin against the son of man could be forgiven, you. But blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven, you, in this age or in the age to come. All right.

Blaspheming the Holy Spirit is attributing the works of the Holy Spirit to the devil, is what it is. Because Jesus cast out demons, who was working through Christ? The Holy Spirit. He said that on many occasions, that it was the Spirit working through Him. So, the Spirit cast out those demons. When they said Satan did it, they blasphemed the Holy Spirit by attributing the works of the Holy Spirit to the devil, okay? So, that's basically what He was referring to.

Now, it is a unique sin, because it specifically relates to Jesus Christ, and it is to say that when Jesus Christ is on Earth and doing His work, when someone comes along and sees that work and attributes it to the devil, that is an unforgivable sin. And there's a sense in which, it's unique to that moment. I don't see that same sin being committed today at all. I think that was a sin, for example, of the Pharisees, then. They had heard everything Jesus said. They had seen everything that He had done, miracle after miracle after miracle, lesson after lesson after lesson, work after work after work. They had just been exposed to the majesty of Jesus Christ. They had concluded that He was Satanic, and He said, "If you attribute the works that you've seen me do, and you come to the conclusion they're Satanic, you'll never be forgiven for that." You have attribute - you have come to a 180 degree opposite result, so you can never be saved.

And I really believe that what He is saying there is that when Christ was on the Earth and doing what He did, if people came up to the conclusion that it was Satanic, they were hopeless, right? They had all the information, all the revelation, and they got the 180 degrees, the opposite conclusion that was right, to the one that was right. Now, He said that it could be committed in this age and the age to come, and it may be that He was referring to the age in which Christ was here, and the age to come, which was the Kingdom, when He'll be back again, and that same sin could be committed the next time He's here, doing those same mighty deeds.

But I don't see it as necessarily having specificity for this age in which we live. However, I would add this. Anyone who rejects the Lord Jesus Christ, to any degree today, will never be able to be forgiven.

JIM: So, you're saying that the sin cannot be committed by anyone, Christian or non-Christian, right now?

JOHN: Right. I'm saying now that that sin, as we see it in Matthew, Chapter 12, is not a sin that can be committed. Like, for example, the charismatics have said to me, "If you keep saying things against tongues, you'll commit the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and be damned forever." Okay? That isn't what that's talking about. That's talking about concluding that Jesus Christ works for the devil. Now, if you conclude that today, at the end of all your information, at the end of all your revelations, you're not ever going to be forgiven for it, right? Because people don't go to Heaven who think Jesus is Satanic. But only in that general sense. Okay?

JIM: Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit right there, just as you just said.

JOHN: Right.

JIM: If, after today, then I -

JOHN: The point is this. The point is, what if a person, at one point in his life, says that Jesus Christ is not Lord. He doesn't believe in Jesus Christ. He's gonna go to Hell. If he says that once in his life, is he damned for the rest of his life? What if he changes his mind? What if the spirit prompts his heart, convicts him of sin, redeems him and saves him? Is God gonna accept that? Of course, because we all came that way, right? We were all blasphemers. We were all Christ rejecters. We were all God haters. We were all ungodly sinners. We were all doomed and damned to Hell. But when we turn to Jesus Christ, we are saved, and we are forgiven of blaspheming the name of Jesus Christ, which we all did before we gave Him the glory due His name, right?

JIM: Right.

JOHN: So, that's not talking about that. That's talking about a specific sin of being here when Jesus is here and of seeing His works and hearing everything He taught. And when you have full revelation, saying He is Satanic, you're hopeless, cause you can't get any more revelation then. Okay? And maybe it'll be committed when He comes back to reign in His kingdom. Okay? Just a few more and our time is gone. Maybe another ten minutes, okay?

ERIC: Great. How are you doing, John? I'm Eric. And how would I be able to prove to someone that the Bible is truth?

JOHN: Oh, that's a good question. I've written this book. [Laughter] You want to know something? You can't prove to someone the Bible's true. You can't prove it to them, but you can sure make a good argument. I believe the Bible is true, because I believe it's true. You can't prove it's true. That's a matter of faith. That's the work of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit convincing the heart. But I think you can sure pile up a lot of evidence. And there are five lines of evidence that the Bible's true, human

testimony.

One of the reasons it's true is because, look around you. See who's lives it's changed. It's pretty hard to argue, isn't it? Number two, what about Jesus Christ? Never a person like Him. How do you explain Him? Men didn't invent Him. Why would men invent a perfect man, who condemned all the rest of them? Men don't write books like that. They write books about imperfect people they can identify with.

And then you have the area, for example, of science and archaeology. How are you going to explain the fact that the Bible is verified archaeologically and scientifically? It says in the Bible, "He hangeth the Earth on nothing." That's the oldest book in the Bible. How did Job know that when nobody else discovered it for centuries? And then what are you going to do with the miracles of the Bible? And what about the prophecies? You've got hundreds and hundreds of prophecies that predicted something was going to happen. It happened exactly as the Bible said. Who knows that but God?

So, I think those are the kinds of things that force people to look at the Scripture. I have a little book that's now out of print, and we're coming out with a new edition of it within the next year, called Focus on Fact. It explains all of these reasons why we believe the Bible is true. That might help you. Okay. Yes?

BILL: Hi, John. My name is Bill.

JOHN: Hi, Bill.

BILL: I just want to know how Jesus got back to life.

MALE VOICE: I think, John, what he wants to know is how did we know that Jesus arose from the dead. What's the evidence?

JOHN: Oh, okay. You want to know how He came out of the grave? Okay, Bill. Number one, the grave is empty. See, it's empty. So, we know He must have left, right? Number two, He appeared to 500 different people after He came out of the grave. Now, if you had to go to court, and you had 500 witnesses for your case, it'd be pretty convincing. Thirdly, we know because when Jesus went into the grave, the Apostles were afraid and they were scattered and they ran. And a few weeks later, they were preaching Jesus Christ, risen from the dead. The lives were transformed. And then we know He's alive because He gave birth to the church. And we know He's alive because He lives where? He lives in our hearts. And that's how we know He's alive. Thank you, Bill.

BILL: Thank you.

JIMMY: Hello, my name is Jimmy, and I would like to ask a question. Okay, I know Timothy chapter 2, 14:12, saying a woman cannot teach in a ____ son. What convinced you how to define sharing and

teaching?

JOHN: Oh. Are you asking about whether a woman can teach in the church, but - you're saying the Bible says a woman can't teach in a church, and you're asking can she share something in the church? Is that what he's asking?

FEMALE VOICE: Okay, it says in 1 Timothy 2 that they can't teach. But in a Bible study situation, can they share or can they teach through other -

JOHN: Oh, yeah, sure. Sure, right. It says in 1 Timothy 2, "Let the women keep silence in the churches." And what it's talking about is the order of the church. In fact, 1 Timothy is written to give order to the church. When the church comes together in its formal time, when the church comes together to break bread, when the church comes together to be taught the Word of God, it is not the woman's place to stand up and take authority in the church. But when individual Christians sit together to share around the Word of God, it's a marvelous opportunity for women to participate.

In fact, the Psalm that said a great host are the women who publish the good news. And so, we encourage women to share their insights in the Word of God, to be a part of the fellowship of the Bible study, the discussion of the Bible study. That's a very important thing. But when it comes to the church and its worship and order, there's no place for a woman to take the authority to teach in the church. That's not her God-given role, okay? Good. Yes?

FEMALE VOICE: Hi, John. I want to ask you, what does it mean for a Christian to be committed to a local body of believers?

JOHN: What does it mean for a Christian to be what?

FEMALE VOICE: To be committed to a local body of believers?

JOHN: Ah, okay.
FEMALE VOICE: Okay.

JOHN: Well, I don't think there's any other way to be a Christian, than to be committed to a local body of believers. And I talk about church membership or identifying, we have a problem with that in our society. We have people that just float, you know? They look at the church page like the movie page, to figure who's playing where, we'll go here, this guy or whatever. But the church knows no identity of a Christian without a local assembly. I mean, the New Testament, there's no such thing, there's no conception of such an individual. If you're a Christian, you're a member of the body, right, of the community, of the assembly, to commune with God's people. It says in Hebrews 10, "Forsake not the assembly of yourselves together as the manner of some, much more to see that they approach it."

So, Christians are called together in a wonderful unity. I believe every Christian ought to identify with a local assembly. The reason some don't is because they just like to be loose. They don't want accountability, or they can't find some place that's 100 percent according to their little list of standards. Those are not excuses. I mean, those are excuses, not reasons. Every Christian should be committed to a local assembly. That means two things. One, I submit to the authority of those elders. Two, I want to minister here. And the reason we have church membership here is so that people can say, "I want to bring my life in under the shepherding of these men," and two, "I want to minister here."

And we want to bring them into membership, because that's the only way we can screen people, the only way we can know people, so that we can approve of them, to send them out in ministry. But I think it's very important to identify with a local church, to come under the authority of the elders for accountability and to come into the ministry for the sake of serving Jesus Christ in that assembly. And your Christianity is tested when you identify with one group of people, isn't it? There's no accountability, there's no testing of your faith when you can float. So, it's a very important thing. Okay?

FEMALE VOICE: Okay, thank you.

JOHN: Thanks. I think we'll take one more question, all right, and then we're going to have to cut it off.

FEMALE VOICE: Hi, John.

JOHN: Hi.
FEMALE VOICE: I'm getting married in about seven months, and I wanted your own opinion on what makes a good, Christian marriage? What makes it strong?

JOHN: Okay. That's easy to answer. What makes a good, Christian marriage? Two good Christians. [Laughter] [Applause]

FEMALE VOICE: I knew that.

JOHN: And what that means is that you both love the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart, and He's the priority in your life. And that you faithfully, together, pursue a path of obedience to Jesus Christ. You know, marriage is, first of all, a commitment, and then it grows into a love. But the commitment has to be there. And the commitment in marriage, first of all, is not to each other, but it's to Jesus Christ.

In fact, you know when Haback - no, not Haback, what am I saying? Somebody, Malachi - Malachi, Haback, you know. Happiness is sitting next to somebody who knows where Haback is, right? Malachi said, "You have done," and this, I think, is interesting. "You've done treacherously against the wife of your youth." You've divorced your wife, and it says you have broken your covenant. And that is interesting, because the indictment of those people was not that they stopped loving their wife. It wasn't that they had a bad testimony in the community. It was that they broke a covenant, and they violated their own integrity.

I think marriage is, first, a covenant. And the sad thing in divorce is that you are not a person who keeps his word. That's the sad thing. The violation of covenant. So, in a marriage, you approach a marriage, then, as a covenant. And the only - believe me, as soon as you get married, Satan takes off after you, cause he'd love to destroy it. And the only way you can protect it is to build a deep, profound relationship with Jesus Christ, and that's the insulation for a marriage, okay?
FEMALE VOICE: Thank you.

JOHN: God bless you. Oh, everybody disappeared. Well, time really flies, doesn't it? Does it? [Laughter] From my side, it does. [Laughter] And I'm so thrilled with this, you know, because we need to know what's going on in our hearts, don't we? And it's very important to me. If this isn't for you, at least it's for me, cause I hear what you're asking and I know what you're thinking. You know, I've been teaching here for 14 years, and, you know, it's hard for me to realize that not all of you have been here the whole time. The people are coming and going, and you're asking questions that I say, "I've covered that. I've covered that." Don't they know I've said that? [Laughter] But, you see, what we realize is that new people are coming, and new insights are dawning on folks, and that's so exciting. And you just keep searching the Scriptures, will you? Keep pursuing the truth and God will bless it on to your life.

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