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

Bible Questions and Answers, Part 25
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 1301-W

Tonight we're going to have just a little family time. And I've been looking forward to this. I've been sort of saying everything I wanted to say and more. In fact, I told somebody the other day I said more than I know already. And want to be sure that as a pastor and as a church family, we really interact. You know, in the book of Acts it says Paul reasoned with them out of the Scripture. He used the word that means to dialogue.

And one of the things that seem to be lost maybe in the church today is that opportunity for real interchange of dialogue and a sharing of what's on our hearts. Particularly in line with the things that we've been learning recently in the anatomy of a church series. We've been talking about a lot of things, and I don't think tonight we want to just get into answering all the really easy questions like pre-destination and all of those kind of...and where do babies go in rapture and what about pregnant ladies when they get raptured? What happens to their babies? And those are the common questions that I always get.

And now I've peaked your interest and you're not going to let me off the hook, right? But we'll answer those on a regular Wednesday night question and answer times. But we thought tonight it would be a good time for us to...to sort of think about the church. This morning Dick ministered to you in response to the series and then we all receive this grace tomorrow. And we've talked a lot about what our church ought to be.

We've just finished a shepherd's conference, and that always helps our whole staff and group of elders and leaders to sort of refresh our own minds and the things we're committed to. And we just wanted to make sure we were really saying what you wanted to know. And we were touching all the bases and so I...I thought it would be well tonight if we just had a kind of a time when you could ask some questions or...or maybe you wanted to share something the Lord did in your life through this series.

We want to try to sort of confine it to things of the church, the life of the church, maybe a biblical question about the church, of course, or how it should function or what it's priorities are or some clarification. Perhaps you even want to ask about a dimension of ministry here or whatever at Grace Church or maybe you want to tell us how the Spirit of God has used this series or a message within the series to really touch your life and do some very special things that would be meaningful that would be offered as a praise to the Lord.

I'm going to ask some of our men to stand by each microphone just to help you articulate what you're going to ask. If they'll go there right now, Bob and Fred and Eric, I think. This just helps to kind of get our questions in line and they'll be asking you your question as you come to the microphone and then I'll do my best to answer it, all right?

And I'll take the role of the Apostle Paul. Only I have one problem, I can't speak under direct inspiration. So I'll do my best with the Word in hand to...to answer your question. Now, I don't want to confine you. If there's a burning question in your heart that's of great importance and the practical working of your Christian life, that's related to the church. I just don't want to solve how many angels you can put on the head of a pin or can God make rock so big you can't lift it. You know what I mean? I don't want to...I don't want to get into the stuff that doesn't have an answer. Or how far is infinity, those kinds of questions. How long is eternity?

So, if you have a question related to the Christian life, the life of the church, something that's in your heart, just go right now to one of those microphones. And probably you ought to line up no more than three at a microphone and then when you see it get down to two or maybe four could line up when it gets down to three, you can take a place there and we'll call on you to ask your question. So just go ahead and line up if you want to and we'll get around to your question. And I hope you'll have a sense of freedom.

You know, if you're bothered by asking a question, just say this friend of mine sent me up here, and he's got a real problem and wanted me to ask about it. So don't be intimidated. I think we ought to start in the middle with the ladies first, okay?

BETTY: Do we start now?

JOHN: Yes.

BETTY: Okay, my name is Betty Kennedy, and I have a question in regards to the working of the Holy Spirit. And in John 16, 13thverse, it says, "How be it when he, the Spirit of Truth has come, he will guide you into all truth." And then over in 1 Corinthians the 12thChapter, the 7thverse it says, "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit with all." And then in then in the 13th verse, it says, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

Well, I'm wondering why if we have the same Spirit that in the church today there is such a controversy of doctrine concerning the gifts of the Spirit such as miracles, healings, gifted tongues, and also in the Christian church I have a nephew who's a pastor of the Christian church Phoenix, Arizona, he teaches that faith plus baptism is necessary for salvation. And that question concerning

the Spirit really bothers me, because why isn't...isn't it that we all receive the same truth to teach the church?

JOHN: Right, all right, let me answer your question, Betty. That's a very good question and that's a very important question. Basically, the question is simply stated. Why, if we all have the Holy Spirit, do we find differences in our doctrine if we're being taught by one Spirit? That's what you're asking.

Let me first of all say that 1 Corinthians 12:13, "By one Spirit we're all baptized into one body." That is a sweeping comprehensive statement regarding every single believer. That says that when you put your faith in Jesus Christ you will be, at that point, placed into the body of Christ. Now that occurs with everyone. You're...the application of that verse is to everyone.

Backing up to verse 7, which you mention, in 1 Corinthians 12. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man." What that means is that the Spirit of God also manifests himself to every believer equipping that believer for a unique ministry. So we all possess the Holy Spirit, and we're all placed into the body by the Holy Spirit. So the conclusions she is drawing is exactly right. All of us are possessors of the Spirit of God. We all have living within us the Holy Spirit. What Paul said to the Corinthians "Know ye not your body is the temple of the Spirit of God." Now the issue comes in John 16:13. Because in John 16:13 our Lord says, "When he the Spirit of Truth has come, he will guide you into all truth. He shall not speak of himself, but whatever he shall hear that shall he speak and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and show it unto you."

Now, let me just answer it in the very simple way. That is a very unique setting. Jesus is in the upper room and He is gathered together with the 12. In fact, He's gathered together with the 11, because Judas has already been dismissed to betray Him. And what He has left basically is the 11 disciples. And they are going to be those who carry on the message. Now, at this point, Jesus never wrote anything down did He? He has written nothing. In order for them to go out and rightly articulate the truth and rightly speak the message that Jesus gave and rightly reiterate the facts of His life as Matthew, Mark, Luke, John did, in order for them to do that our Lord grants to these Apostles a special unique gift of the Spirit of God which kept them in their preaching free from any error. This I believe to be a unique gift given to the Apostles, not to every Christian.

We are guided into all truth through the pages of the Word of God and by the instruction of the Holy Spirit, but that's only because we have the truth. We don't receive it by revelation, it's in addition to this or instead of this. Do you understand what I'm saying? We have the Word of God and the Spirit of God leads us to understand the Word. So, John 16:13 is not a verse that...that causes us a problem. It simply promises the Apostles absolutely accurate recall of the incidents and teaching of the life of Christ, so that, for example, when John writes down the gospel and writes down what Jesus did and Jesus said, he is exactly accurate and he is speaking the very mind of God. So 16:13 is a

promise of inspiration to the Apostles. There's no such promise given to a preacher. The only guarantee that we have that will come to the truth is to rightly divide, right? And we can't stand there and get it from the Holy Spirit. It says 2 Timothy 2, "Study to," what, "show yourself approved under God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed," doing what?

BETTY: Rightly dividing...

JOHN: "Rightly dividing the word of truth." So since we don't have the apostolic guarantee of revelation or inspiration, we have to go to the Word of God in this era. Now, at that point, you might ask the same question. If we all possess the Holy Spirit, and we all go to the same Bible, why do we come up with differences. And that's the same question really.

Now, let me answer that. There are several reasons, the reason men differ in interpreting the Scripture, multiple issues. Number one, we're sinful and therefore we have certain limitations on our understanding, right. I mean, we have limitations. No single person is so pure that in that person resides all truth. In fact, our sin indicates to us that we cannot have perfection, right? So they're going to be areas where we are incorrect.

No, let me say this in a way I hope you'll understand. I know there are errors in my theology, I just don't know where they are, because I'm doing my best to be accurate with the Word of God, but I know I'm not the beginning and the ending of all truth and absolute accuracy. I know there would have to be some areas where my sin has blinded me. Where my humanness has left me short of the ultimate reality that's there. So our sinfulness contributes to that, the fact that we're human and we have no guarantee of being protected from error as the Apostles did when they wrote the Scripture down.

Secondly, there are differences because people go to the Word of God with different presuppositions. In other words, they go with a lot of baggage that they've inherited from their past life. If you, for example, were raised in a...in a Pentecostal church or you were raised in a Christian church which taught baptismal regeneration, faith plus water equals salvation, and that's the way you were raised and your mother and father believed that way and you're grandmother and grandfather and your brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles and your pastor that you admired and so forth, it would be very hard for you to consign all those people to error and ignore that teaching.

So you're bound by certain hereditary or whatever presuppositions which you then take to the Scripture and impose upon it. And that's another problem that we have. Another problem we have interpreting the Scripture is because people don't always do what they ought to do and that's study, work hard. That's why Paul says to Timothy that the elders who labor hard in the Word and doctrine are worthy of double honor.

And I really feel that those three areas are very important for us to understand. And there's a fourth area that's also important. And that is that we disagree a lot of times on things that don't have complete revelation. In other words, we don't have enough data to be dogmatic, so we take different options. Do you understand what I mean by that?

There's a passage in 1 Corinthians that talks about the baptism of the dead. I read a thesis one time, 35 different views of that. Which one's right? I haven't got the faintest idea. I have an opinion, but it's only an opinion, because we don't have enough data to interpret that. We really don't.

And there's one other category that would be the fifth answer. And that is that we can't ultimately, fully and totally know the mind of God, because His mind is infinite and our mind is finite, right?

BETTY: Uh-huh.

JOHN: Okay, so the reason we differ, we differ because we're human. We differ because we tend to have presuppositions. We differ because maybe we don't work hard enough at the text. We differ because we don't have complete information on something and we differ because ultimately we're left short of the ultimate mind of God because we're such finite creatures.

Now, let me tell you something important. I think we could reduce the differences tremendously, tremendously. But I don't think the Bible's that tough and I'm not that smart. I think we could reduce it tremendously if, one, we take care of the humanness thing by going to the Word of God in an attitude of prayer and attitude of purity of life so that we become a pure vessel. Seek the truth.

Secondly, if we would unload the baggage of our presuppositions and let it speak at face value. In other words, let it speak for itself. That's what's called ExoJesusor inductive Bible study. Don't make it say I've got...you know, I've got a great sermon, I've got to find a verse to go with it. That isn't the idea. You let it say what it says and there are ways to do that. Open it up and let your presuppositions and let your traditions and let your heritage get shot to pieces if it has to. If you're not willing to be vulnerable and tear up some of your old books and change some of your old tapes, you're in real trouble.

I remember early at Grace Church, I preached a sermon on why the anti-Christ will be a Jew. And a guy came to me in the middle of the week and said, you're wrong, he'll be a gentile. So the next week, I preached on why the anti-Christ will be the gentile and I have a tape for both, see. And I thought about it a while and threw one of the two away. But the point is, if we're willing...if you're willing to eat crow once in a while, I think is what I'm saying, but sometimes a guy gets something in print and you'll just die the rest of his life before he'll ever change it.

And I think another thing is if men would go to the Word of God and work hard and really work hard and test what they believe against every text of the Word. I think what happens is you get your system and you stick in the passages that feed your system and you don't get out of your system. Well, I hope that helps.

BETTY: Okay, thank you very much.

JOHN: Uh-huh, but it isn't that tough. Really, it isn't folks if you just let the Word speak. Okay.

TOM: Hi, John, my name's Tom Hebner. I have a question I need guidelines on. As a member of Grace Church, if I have an opinion or a view that I really prayed about and I think it's worthy to be considered and I want to express that to a pastor or an elder, and I want to express it in a way that he just doesn't put it under the heading of, you know, not gossip, but under the heading of complaining, is there guidelines that I need to take? And also are their guidelines that the pastor and elder have after I've shared it with them about what they do with it?

JOHN: Right, that's a good question, Tom. Let me tell you how we do that. The reason we have so many pastors apart from my own incompetence, we have a lot guys to take care of everything. But the reason we have so many pastors is so that we can intersect with many, many people. And if you have a view or opinion as you stated it or if you have a concern in your heart, you find the pastor that you know or the one that's closest to you. The one that maybe is in charge of a ministry that you're involved in or an elder that you know very personally and you go to that man and you carry a burden to him. And I would suggest that you not only talk about it, but you put it in writing and ask him if he will to carry it to the elders and he will do that. You don't need to fear that.

And if something gets lost in the cracks, write a letter to me and I get it. I read my mail. I don't always enjoy it all, but I read it and I thank God for it. And I mean, criticism or evaluation or doing this better. That's...we depend on that. We need that. Listen, we're not invincible. We're...we're trying our very best to do what God wants us to do and maybe there are some things that aren't being done that ought to be done or could be done better or could be done differently, and I want to know that. You know, as I've said in this series when I find out we have a problem, I get real excited about that because now I know where the problem is and we can work with it.

So, go to an elder that you know personally, someone who knows your heart and knows, you know, how you feel about things and not only talk about it, but write it down so he can carry it from there to the group of elders as they meet and believe me there will be some sharing of those things.

QUESTIONER: Hi, I was talking to a friend today who's preparing for the mission fields. And it's been a while since I've seen him and he seemed kind of down. So I talked to him for a while. And, you

know, what it appeared to be was like he's getting down because he's realizing what he's doing. You know, he's going to be going out there and it's like walking out on a limb that he knows he's going to break. You know, that won't hold him, only God can, you know, help him. And so I...so I came up with this question and it's, what do you think the key factor or difference is in those Christians who seem to give every ounce of energy to seeing God glorified? And how does Romans Chapter 12 verse 6 and 1 Peter Chapter 4 verses 10-11 relate? And then how can I see my level my commitment grow?

JOHN: I...it's hard for me to hear, but I think what you're asking is what makes the difference a Christian who just sort of floats along and one who really has gifts and really has a strong ministry and dynamic in his life. Is that what you're asking?

QUESTIONER: Yeah.

JOHN: Yeah, boy that's an important...you're really asking important questions, that's great. I'm excited to hear about your friend who wants to go to the mission field. But it isn't like getting out on a limb that might get cut off. If he's going where God wants him, it's like going up the trunk of the biggest tree in the universe. I mean, it'll stand forever.

I mean, it's a great adventure to serve the Lord and he doesn't need to fear anything. If he's in the place of God's will, he ought to go after it with a tremendous amount of exhilaration. There's a balance. I mean, there's a certain amount of fearfulness, because the thing is more than you can handle. But it's a great sense of joy, because it isn't more than God can handle.

The difference, and he's relating to Romans 12:6 which talks about ministering your spiritual gifts. And 1 Peter 4:10-11 talk about, "Each man has received the gift have even so ministered the same. Those who receive speaking gifts according to the power of God, those who have serving gifts according to the power of God that Christ may be glorified in all that."

QUESTIONER: Well, with the certain amount of strength, I think they put the phrase in there according to the amount of strength...

JOHN: Right.

QUESTIONER: ...that God has given.

JOHN: Right.

QUESTIONER: That's...

JOHN: The measure of faith.

QUESTIONER: Yeah.

JOHN: The measure of faith, the amount of strength God's given you. Now, let me just answer that in this way. 1 Corinthians 12 also says there...and you can read the first seven verses there and you'll find that there are differing gifts of the Spirit, differing operations of the Spirit and differing manifestations of the Spirit. In other words, we have different capabilities, we have different power and we have different manifestation. Everybody is different. Some are given visibly more outward power than others. I mean, it's...I say visibly, because it may not be the case in reality. But there are some people who are more dynamic who see things happen more readily, more visibly, more outwardly.

And the answer to your question is this, part of it has to do with the choice of the Spirit of God. That's...that's part of it, okay. In other words, my grandfather used to say that. He used to say that there are some Christians who just have a greater capacity for certain ministries than other. And there's no way to explain it. It's just the way it is. Some people have great faith. Some people have great ability to teach. Some people have tremendous ability to serve and other people seem like they have less quantitatively, right?

I mean, that's...that's right. You look, for example, at the church and you see all different kinds. You look at the pastors, all different kinds, and missionaries, all different kinds. So part of it is the giftedness thing. The second part of it is the commitment issue. And because you can't read a man's heart, when you see a great ministry, you don't really know how those two blend. I mean, it may be a guy with very average gifts and super commitment. Or it may be a guy with super gifts and only average commitment. You know what I'm saying?

QUESTIONER: Yeah.

JOHN: I mean, some people can preach great sermons because they have tremendous gifts and do so rather half-heartedly, if you really knew the insight. Other people can be so exercised in their heart that they're literally pouring out all that they have and it doesn't come off outwardly, maybe as great as somebody else's. So how you know that, I really don't know.

Let me just sum it up by saying this. It is the power you have in your ministry is the combination of the gift that God gives you and the commitment you make to the exercise of those gifts. And the only thing you really can be responsible for is that commitment. And that's why in Ephesians 5:18 it says "Be kept filled with the Spirit of God." As you walk in obedience to God's Word and as you walk under the power and control of the Holy Spirit, you are energized to serve God at the capacity that's maximizing your gifts. See?

Let's put it another way, a spiritual gift is only a channel through which the Spirit flows. I used to illustrate it in a simple way. It's like a glove. If I have a glove lying here and I say okay, glove go play the piano. What does the glove do? It doesn't do anything. But if I put my hand in that glove and play the piano what happens? Chaos, I can't play the piano. But no matter what happens on the piano that glove does what my...you know, there never was a glove that said, oh fingers show me the way to go. I dedicate myself. No, you see, and there never was a glove that argued. You just...basically, the glove just does what the hand does.

So the Spirit of God in filling the life of a believer energizes that believer to spiritual ministry. And a Spirit-filled believer under the control of the Holy Spirit is going to be functioning at maximum capacity. Now his maximum capacity may apparently not be equal to another. But that's only apparent and God evaluates the heart, right? Not the results.

1 Corinthians 4, Paul says, "It's a small thing that I should be judged by you." "It's a small thing that I should," in fact, I don't even judge myself, "but I await that day when the Lord will reveal the secret things of the heart." It's motive, it's inner-attitude, it's the heart that God is after. So that's why we say you want to be a Spirit controlled Christian.

Now, what do we mean by that? Well, Ephesians 5 says, "Be filled with the Spirit." And then it says, "As a result of that," it lists a whole bunch of things that will happen. Well, Colossians 3 says, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly and list the same results." Compare Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 and you'll see they're the same.

So you have all these results of being filled with the Spirit. All the same results of letting the Word dwell in you richly, therefore, we conclude that those two things are the same. So being filled with the Spirit is the same as letting the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. You become a saturated Christian where the Word of God is the controlling agent in your life. You live in obedience under the power of the Spirit and he'll manifest through you His power in the gifts that you have.

You don't need to be analytical. Don't worry about that. The question with you and me and anybody else is, am I allowing the Spirit of God to control my life, and if I am then He's maximizing my giftedness. That's the issue. Okay?

QUESTIONER: Okay, thanks.

JOHN: Good.

QUESTIONER: John, where do babies go? Sorry.

JOHN: Where do...no.

QUESTIONER: Never mind. No.

JOHN: To the nursery, because it says in the Bible, "we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." That's what our ladies in the nurseries, right. That's just to give you...just to give you a simple answer. I don't know, the Bible doesn't say.

QUESTIONER: No, I know, I was just kidding.

JOHN: All right, go ahead.

QUESTIONER: The actual thing I just wanted to say was an observation and that was that it has really been a pleasure to see your heart in opening up the anatomy of the church and also the...like the ice cream social and things like that. One thing I've really seen and I hope other people have too is how small Grace Church can be and how close it can be despite how many thousands of people that are there. And it's a real blessing to be here.

JOHN: That's good, thank you. Thank you. Well, that's...that's really what I trust is true. You know, we had a pastor come to the conference and I shared with them last week the anatomy of the church through the week at the shepherd's conference. And this fellow came to me Sunday night, he's from Canada and he was kind of a...oh he was a very traditional looking fellow and a little older man and a warm heart. And he came to me and he said, "You know, John," he said, "I", this is Sunday night, he said, "I came here to get some...some programs for my church." And he said, "God transformed my life." He said, "I'll never be the same." And that was so wonderful. And he went on to speak about the attitude of the people.

I got a letter today from...I saw it on my desk from some pastor who was here. I can't recall his name, but he's from a quite a large church in the east, and he said, "the thing that overwhelmed me at your church was the intimacy and the love and the caring and the tenderness of the people in the congregation." See well, that's really...that's wonderful, that's really what we're after. We thank God for that.

QUESTIONER: Yeah, John, I'm just wondering in regards to your series on the anatomy of the church, just from your own personal gut feeling and just how much time do you really think that we have before we are called home?

JOHN: Well, I don't have a clue, Dave. I just know, you know, I mean, we're nearer than we've ever been. That's safe, isn't it? And getting nearer all the time. I mean, I don't have my pajamas on. You won't find me on the roof. But I think what the Scriptures tells us, "that no man knows the day nor the

hour and it's an hour that you think not and the Lord comes as a thief in the night," and all of those kinds of things. And I look around me in the world and I see signs that indicate to me that the coming of Christ could happen at any time.

I've often said that there's only one thing that needs to occur before the Lord comes and that's the trumpet and when it happens we're gone. So there's no prophetic scene that has yet to unfold. Israel is in the land, they've been regathered to their place. The things that mark the world of the end times described in 2 Timothy Chapter 3, we see all around us.

So all of the parts of the puzzle are there, the putting together of the European common market, you know, the economic community of ten nations as Daniel sees it in the end times. It's just, you know, the great armies in the east, the conflict in the Middle East, all of that stuff is in the prophetic perspective. And I don't think it's going to be long, but I'm not going to predict, and I just know this, we'll just keep working and working until the Lord comes. We're not going to sit down and watch it happen.

I remember a guy who decided it was going to happen on New Years Day one year and liquidated a $500,000.00 worth of assets and bought praying hands made out plastic that glow in the dark and started shipping them all over the place. And it didn't happen of course and people he send Bibles and tracts and mirrors with Jesus painted on them to people all over the world. Just liquidated every dime he had he was so sure of that. And of course, he looked rather stupid when it didn't happen. So we don't live like that. We just continue to do what we do until the Lord returns. Okay?

QUESTIONER: Okay, first I want to thank and just show my appreciation on how the anatomy of the church is. I rededicated my life once and recommitted my life in my area of ministry at least five times throughout the service. But...

JOHN: Don't feel bad, Paul said, "I die daily." I mean, that's something you do all the time. I recommit myself to the ministry all the time. Because there are times in my life when I want to run. And the Lord sort of gathers me up and I get back and the kind of commitment that has to be there, sure.

QUESTIONER: And my main question is basically in light of today's world situation, and United States part in it, is can a true Christian be involved physically and willingly in a war against other nations? And will you help with the verse or even a book to help me out on certain...

JOHN: Let me just give you a perspective on that, if I can. You can look at a Bible verse. Probably the best one to understand is the 13thChapter of Romans. Because in Romans Chapter 13 we find...and there are a lot, a lot of places...there's a very good book written by Robert Culver called Toward A Biblical View of Civil Government that'll help you a lot to think through the biblical issues.

But in Romans 13, you have a very important perspective given. "Let every soul be subject under the higher powers." It's talking there about government. And you've got to remember that this is being written to Christians in what city?

QUESTIONER: Rome.

JOHN: Rome, so what kind of a higher power was it?

QUESTIONER: It was...

JOHN: It was pagan. Far worse than ours. It had slavery. It was...it was warring when it needed to to accomplish it goals. It was idolatrous. The emperor was worshiped as if he were God. And you could lose your life if you failed to worship him. There is no power but of God. In other words, no authority exists outside of God's allowing it. The powers that be are ordained God, they're set there for God. Who...by God. "Whosoever therefore resists the power, resists the ordinance of God and they that resist shall receive of themselves judgment." In other words, if you violate the law of the land whatever land you're in, you're going to bring judgment on yourself.

Now, those are very general statements. Verse 3 is a qualifier. "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Will thou then not be afraid of the power. Do that which is that good and thou shall have praise of the same." In other words, God has instituted government and it comes in all different kinds. But government basically is designed by God to protect good people and punish bad people. And whatever government you're in, if you'll just follow along with the good people and keep the rules and obey the laws, you can survive.

When George Evinsmet with our staff, you know, who was in Russia and where all the persecution goes on with Christians, they were very interesting people to talk to, because they said we never break a rule of our government. If we are ever persecuted, if we are ever reprimanded, if we are ever imprisoned it will always and only be for the cause of Jesus Christ and we keep that as clear as we can keep it. We never violate...we know our government is oppressive. They know all the factors about Russian government. But they never break Russian governmental law. They will always be persecuted only for their stand for Jesus Christ. So even they understand the meaning of Romans 13 in their context and it would be the same for the Roman Christians. And then in verse 4 it says, "That the rulers are ministers of God to thee for good and if thou do that which is evil be afraid for they bear not the sword in vain." In other words, God has actually made the government of nations be able to execute judgment on people to protect the innocent from the evil So that...that police...people who work in prisons, executioners even, and we might add soldiers who keep the peace and protect that land bear not their sword in vain.

In other words, it's a God ordained function. He is a minister of God, an avenger to execute wrath on them that do evil. So you want to be subject and it goes on to say you want to be sure that you pay your taxes also so the government can carry on its work. So generally we are to be subject to the government.

Now, let me give you a perspective. What if the government calls you to serve in a war. I believe you can do that based on Romans 13 if you are instrument of that which is right against that which is evil. If, for example, I'm a citizen of the United States and I am drafted into the service to go down and protect the Caribbean from communists and Cuban terrorists that are being trained to be sent all over the western world to apply their art of causing revolution and destruction and devastation and mass murder and all of that, I can act on behalf of that which is right against that which is evil and murderess. If on the other hand, I was a citizen of Cuba and I was asked to serve as a soldier in their army to apply the terroristic activities against an innocent nation, I couldn't do that. Do you understand the difference?

QUESTIONER: Uh-huh.

JOHN: Okay.

QUESTIONER: Hi, John. My question refers to the passage in 1 Timothy Chapter 3, that's starting with verse 2. "An overseer then must be about reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, escaping tufor, he must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity. But if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God." Taking care of...taking account a hypothetical situation, a man happens to be a pastor is going through a divorce from his wife, does...and knowing that God hates divorce, does it conclude without question that this man does not have any right to be up on that pulpit?

JOHN: All right, let me answer that question as directly as I can. Basically, the answer to your question is yes. He does not have that right. And there may be cases in which he is a victim of an adulteress wife like Josea's wife and he may have made no contribution to that at all. She may have been all on her own. But when he goes through a divorce, he ceases to be able to demonstrate the model that God wants him to demonstrate.

In the Old Testament, the priests had the same kind of qualifications. Now, you could be a prophet. You could be a king. You could be a lot of things, a great leader. You could have been a judge. You could have been a lot of things in Israel, but you couldn't be a priest if you were disqualified on one of those technicalities. In the church today, I believe there are men who have been divorced who can serve in great ways in ministry. They're not hindered in the ministry at all, but they can't be an elder

or a pastor in a local church when that is an issue.

Now, let me explain what these things mean here. In verse 2, "He must be blameless." That's the overarching qualification of which all the rests are only sub-qualifications. In other words, blamelessness is then defined by all the other phrases. He is to be without blame. He's to be a person that you can't...you can't point to his life and find something which says this guy is unrighteous. He's not right. His life isn't right. If you can find that, then he's disqualified. Now, what are the things he must demonstrate? First, he must be, and the Greek text says, a one woman man. It doesn't say the husband and one wife in the Greek. It says a one woman man. Now it isn't talking about a man who's only been married once. It's talking about a man who is committed to the woman who is his wife.

You see being married to one woman doesn't qualify you for anything. There's a lot of unsaved people who are married to one woman. You know...understand what I'm saying? That's not...if that means you have to have only one wife or have to have one wife that would...and many people believe this, that means that if you've ever been divorced ever in your life your disqualified or if you don't have a wife your disqualified or if your wife died you're disqualified.

But just being married isn't a qualification for anything. The Greek text says a one woman man. Listen, I'm not interested so much in whether a person's only had one wife, as I am in whether or not he is totally and utterly and 100% devoted to the woman who is his wife. Do you understand that? That is a spiritual mark. And that ought to be understood rightly because there are so many pastors running around the world looking at a lot of other women than their own wife, but they stay with their wife so they can sort of keep themselves in the ministry. And ultimately, many of them blow out of that and they run off with some woman in the church. And you know that disaster. That's a disqualifier if that happens, because he is not a one woman man. He is not. You have to be a one woman man.

And then it goes down into verse 4 and it says, "he rules well his own house and has his children in subjection with seriousness." If he doesn't know how do that, how is he going to take care of the church. I...I am convinced that when...and I think Timothy's text here is talking about the children in the home must be in submission to the father. How many times have you heard the old stories about the preacher's kids, right? They're the worst kids in the church and says it shouldn't be. That is a disqualifier based on this text. He is to be a model as far as life and his family is to be a model.

Now, maybe you say well what if I've got five kids and one has bombed out on me, two have bombed out of me there? I mean, I can't get saved for them. And maybe the Lord didn't choose them or whatever or whatever. Again, I say, it is not a question of your...you can't a ministry. You can have a ministry if your children don't believe. You could be used by God in a powerful way. You could be a great soul winner. You could be a great anything, but you can't stand in front of the church and be

the pattern and the model that all the rest of the people are supposed to set their life after.

It's simply a one role that has very unique qualifications. Some are the greatest missionaries...missionaries the world's have ever seen. Some are the greatest evangelists the world has ever seen lost all their kids, all of them.

QUESTIONER: Am I right on this too, as a minister's son, is he responsible to submit to that ministry even though he would feel that it is wrong?

JOHN: Are you asking me if the kid ought to just chime in just to keep his father in his job? Is that what you're saying? I mean, that's idea.

QUESTIONER: I guess so.

JOHN: Yeah, yeah, but it won't work. Because there's one thing you can't fake and that's true Christianity. And that's why Titus adds this, Timothy says he's got to be able to rule his children and have them in subjection. Titus says they have to be believing children. And Titus adds the dimension that it isn't just kids that obey, but it's kids that believe. So that when they grow up they affirm the faith.

I've said this before. I'll say it again. If my children don't believe, I'm out of the ministry as far as this role here is concerned. Now, I'm not saying that to put pressure on my kids, but that's the way the Bible says it. And that's okay. If God wants me here, then he'll have to take care of my children in that regard. I'll do all I can, but ultimately it's up to Him. Patricia and I were praying the other night and it just struck me as I was praying to thank God that my children believe. And they don't believe because I'm such a great parent or she's such a great parent. They believe because God is such a great God of grace, that He redeemed them and kept me in the ministry. Here that kids?

QUESTIONER: Thank you.

JOHN: But let me say this also, I don't want to say either that if a person has ever had a divorce in the entire history of their life they're disqualified from Christian ministry. I mean, it is if they are blameless and love their...it is a present qualification. He is a one woman man. Listen, do you think in the church of Corinth when they selected elders they had a hard time finding one that didn't have a divorce. They must have, and in the Roman church and all the rest of them.

But if you do have a man in the ministry as a leader, an overseer, elder bishop who's had a divorce it'd better have been divorce so far in the past that he's had years and years and years to prove his credibility and spiritual character so that he fits these present qualifications. Yes?

QUESTIONER: Okay, I want to say that since our whole faith is predicated on the fact that we are sinners and that we need a Savior and we were born into sin, I guess, John, what really baffles me is that God...he's got all his foreknowledge of looking down through the ages. And knowing this, I guess what baffles me is why would he ever create Satan knowing that he's going to fall and make him so beautiful, knowing he's going to have all this pride problem and knowing that through the ages people are going to be...all...do all this suffering, you know? I guess it baffles me.

JOHN: Yeah.

QUESTIONER: Why would he ever create Satan knowing that all this is going to happen?

JOHN: Right, right. Let me ask you a question. Do you understand eternity? Something that always was and always will be?

QUESTIONER: Well, I...I don't really, but I mean, I can try.

JOHN: I don't understand that either. I don't understand that either. I don't understand eternity. Something that always was, something always will be. God never didn't exist and always will exist. I don't understand that. And another thing I don't understand is why God created Satan.

QUESTIONER: That's what I'm saying. I don't...

JOHN: Yeah, I don't understand.

QUESTIONER: ...either.

JOHN: You know what...you know what I've been able to do through the years of study of the Bible? I've just been able to reduce the number of things I don't understand. There are still some, and that's one. I don't know that. Because God didn't tell us that. But I'll tell you one thing, God doesn't make mistakes. He's too loving to be unkind. He's too wise to make a mistake.

QUESTIONER: I...I don't think He...

JOHN: He's too powerful.

QUESTIONER: ...made a mistake. I'm just trying to...

JOHN: No.

QUESTIONER: ...get a...

JOHN: He's...

QUESTIONER: ...an understanding.

JOHN: He's too powerful to be a victim of anything. So I don't know the answer to your question. And you can't understand it and I can't either and don't try. Just accept it. Satan is and that's all you need to know. Why he is is God's...you start asking why questions and you'll find yourself under the bed saying the Greek alphabet. You don't...there's no answer. I mean, He did and that's the way it is. And I don't know the answer to that, but I know that some day I'm going to know and I'm going to say it "oh it was so simple, I just...," you know, but we have this little small brain that can't absorb all of that. But don't worry about the things. Like Mark Twain once said, and it was great wisdom, he said, "It isn't the things I don't understand that bother me, it's the things I do understand." And if we'll major on the things we do understand, we'll have enough to keep us busy until we do understand what we don't understand. Got it? Okay. Oh in the middle, all right.

QUESTIONER: Hi, John. We were in the...

JOHN: We can't take anymore after maybe the next three questions, we'll be out of time.

QUESTIONER: A woman that I know talked to me about a situation where she rebuked a man. And she was told by her Bible study leader that that was inappropriate. Now, I think in looking Matthew 18, there's no gender involved in there. And I want to know is it proper for a woman to be able to rebuke a man? And is it also proper for a woman to rebuke her husband?

JOHN: I think...I've been rebuked by all the women in all my life. And you want to know the truth, I thank God for that. I think there is a way and a place and a time and a right woman who can speak those kinds of things, yes. Yeah, I...you know, I...I don't think that marriage is a deal where women can't tell their husband what they ought to be told. I think it's a very perfect environment for doing that. How else can God make a woman a perfect help mate if she's not willing to tell the guy where he needs help.

A lot of women were clapping. Less men, but no, you see that's...that's an over statement and you need in a loving way just as a husband needs to...to rebuke his wife in a loving way, but that is very, very, very important. Very, very important. You know, my wife and I were talking recently about the fact that God had us for each other and one of the reasons that he had us for each other is because we are strength to each other's weakness. And I hear from her the things I need to hear and I hope she hears once in a while from me the things she needs to hear too. I would never want it any different than that. Some of the times, I don't want to hear the things I'm supposed to hear, but

there's a...there's a sense in which when you marry that right person or you have women in your life who are spiritually mature, who can deal with things in love that those kind of situations are right and God will express his desire through a woman to a man if it's done right and in the right spirit.

RONNA: Hi, John. My name is Ronna, and I was wondering is a soul a soul including a mind intellect and will at the point of conception and if so, what happens to babies that are aborted?

JOHN: Well, yes, I think the answer to that is yes. I believe that when God creates life, he creates life. And I believe that life begins at conception and therefore, personhood begins at conception. John the Baptist in his mother's womb, it says, was filled with the Holy Spirit. And you remember that the babe in the womb leaped for joy? Do you remember David said in sin did my mother conceive me? So on the one hand you have the embryos or fetuses that are filled with the Spirit and on the other hand you have a sinful fetus. That indicates personhood. That indicates responsibility. That indicates that there is soulishness there, there's life there, there's Spirit there. And so I believe if you push me to the wall on this and this is kind of my opinion, if you study the narrow gate passages, narrow gate, narrow way, few that be that find it, it may well be that heaven will be more populated by the mortality rate and the abortion rate than it will be by faith. Because I believe that when children at any point and time after personhood is initiated, they go to be with God. And that we may find that heaven has a lot of those people and maybe that's why mortality rates are so high in non-Christian countries.

RONNA: Just to finish, so a woman that has had an abortion and now is saved, I could tell her that...

JOHN: Well, that's my belief, because Jesus said, "Suffer the little children that come unto me and forbid them not for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And I believe that it is within God's design that he redeems those who don't know their right hand from their left hand. And that's a sign of infancy, and he takes them to be with him.

RONNA: That's comforting for a person..

JOHN: Yes.

RONNA: ...who's gone through that. That's great.

JOHN: Listen the Old Testament says "He gathers the little lambs in His bosom and gently leads those that are with you." So I believe God cares for those.

RONNA: Thanks.

JOHN: Uh-huh.

QUESTIONER: Hi, John. I was wondering how you feel about a woman being a pastor of church as you are?

JOHN: I didn't hear the question. What was it?

QUESTIONER: I was wondering how you feel about a woman being a pastor of church as you are?

JOHN: A woman? I feel...I feel very bad about that. See, let me just read you what the Bible says, okay? 1 Timothy 2:11, "Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. I permit not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." And this is in relation to verse 15 of Chapter 3, that "Thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

So if you want to know how to behave in the church, the first thing you do is you don't have a woman be the pastor, because that's what it says in the Bible. That's not my opinion. I'm not trying to be a chauvinist. I'm just trying to do what the Bible says. And that's...that's the thing that's the issue. Now the balance comes. You say, why is that right? Why is that so? Somebody says oh that's Paul he's a chauvinist and that we can throw that out. But then if you think and say oh it's a rabbinical glop. Some Rabbi got carried away and stuck it in Genesis 2 and then it's appalineextrapolation and so forth and he just stuck in there. And it's cultural, I hear this stuff. It's cultural all the time, it's cultural.

But it says in the next verse, "The reason is Adam was first formed and then Eve." That's not cultural folks, that's creative. That's the way it was from the creation and not only that Adam was not deceived, but they woman being deceived is in the transgression. So the woman is confirmed in the submissive role, one by creation, two deception. She needs protection. She was created as a helper to the man and it was made evident when she stepped out from under his authority, she goofed up the whole human race. So basically, well, I mean, I don't want to leave it just at that, you know.

Somebody said, God created man, then he rested, then He created woman, and no one's rested. But...in fact, somebody even went so far as to say there wouldn't be any women in heaven, because it says in Revelation 4 there was silence in heaven for the space of 30 minutes. But I don't...I don't want to get...I don't want to get carried away. See those things are definitely chauvinistic statements. So, but let me say this, that the reason...the reason God has designed it this way is just that's...is because God has designed it that. And a woman ought to accept the wonderful role she has, which is given in the next verse, Verse 15. She shall be saved in child-bearing. If they continue in faith and love and so forth and holiness.

What does that mean? It means this, look the man is given leadership, but the woman is saved. Saved? What do you mean saved? Soul salvation, you're not saved by having a baby. You're not

saved by child birth. But what does it mean she should be saved in child-bearing? It means this, you're saved from any thought of second class status. Men, we have the authority, but women have the influence.

I mean, a babe that's suckled at the breast of a mother for the first few months and years of its life develops and intimacy that never changes if that mother loves that child the way that child needs to be loved. And there will be an intimacy of relationship and an intimacy of influence. Let's face it, a child is 95% shaped by the time it's five years old and 90% of the shaping has probably occurred fro the mother in many, many cases.

So the balance that God has built in so marvelously is husband has headship, wife has influence. And that is another reason why I'm so strongly committed to the fact that women ought to take care of the kids in the home and they ought to develop intimate and long term relationships with those children. That's their input, not taking a briefcase and marching off to the factory or the plant or the office. That isn't how women influence the world in God's design. They influence the world by shaping the personalities of the next generation. And that's the priority role as I see it.

I'm going to just take two more questions, okay? And then we're going to have to cut it off. So, I'm sorry for the rest of you folks. We'll do this again. Boy time...do you realize how fast this has gone? Go ahead.

QUESTIONER: Okay, I'm currently in the discipleship evangelism and I really enjoy it. Sometimes I feel like it's working out my salvation with fear and trembling. But in the God's section, there came a question in my mind and I asked my area leader and he suggested I ask you. And...

JOHN: In front of 3,000, right?

QUESTIONER: Right.

JOHN: Okay, go ahead.

QUESTIONER: Okay, it's a two part question. It says, does God love everyone? Second part, two kinds of love for the elect for the world. Here's my clarification, it says, I understand the proclamation of the gospel as a love letter from God penned with the blood Christ. This proclamation of God's love is to be shared with all the world. I see it as the manifestation or revelation of God's love to all humanity. But...but I see a special intimate for ordained love relationship that God has with the elect that is unique only to them, which the world as described in John Chapters 14 through 17 cannot share in. And I was wondering if you could understand that.

JOHN: Well, I think you've answered your own question. I think that's...that's correct. I believe that God loves the whole world because he said, "God so loved"...it says, "God so loved the world." I believe there's a sense in which God in His in great love offers the world the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but the sins of the whole world. And I believe that God loves all men because it is God's character to love.

You see God doesn't love you because you're loveable. Once you understand that then you're off the hook. I'm not loveable either. God loves because it's His nature to love and if you exist, you get loved. Okay? That's an attribute, right? It isn't something that's drawn out of Him by you or me. So he loves the whole world, but yes, He has an intimate and special, unique love for His own. That's right.

For example, in Amos 3:2, he says, "Israel only have I known." What does He mean? They're the only people he knows about? He knows about all people. He knows everything. He is our mission. But He has an intimate of a special people, and so does He love all, but has an intimate love with the special people. And that's what John 10 is trying to say when it says my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me and so forth and so forth. Yes? One more question.

QUESTIONER: Okay, I have two questions. One is if I wanted to be a missionary when I grew up and...but it's against God's will, how will I know it's against God's will?

JOHN: Okay, I'll tell you. You'll know basically through your heart's desire and through the circumstances and the people around you. The key is this, if you want to be a missionary, you keep wanting to be a missionary. Don't...you know, don't withdraw from that. Don't turn away from that. Don't worry about whether the Lord will work it out. He will. He will. All you need to do is concern yourself with your own life. And if you're an obedient Christian and you're reading the word and you're praying and you're following Christ, He's going to lead you right where He wants you. He's going to put you right in the spot He wants you. Okay? All you have to do is take care of your life before God and live in obedience and live a pure life and as I said, pray and read the Scripture and as time goes on, God will shape you into the person He wants you to be and He leads you right to the place He wants you to be. You don't have to worry about that. He never has a problem getting a message through. We have a problem sometimes here it. So he'll give you the right message. And if you've got the right receiver going, you'll pick it up. Okay?

QUESTIONER: Okay, my other question was, we were having a discussion this morning on the occult, and I wanted to know that if a Jehovah's witness came up to you and said that...that their religion was the right way, what would you say?

JOHN: I'd say they were wrong, first of all. It would depend on the situation. When the Jehovah's witnesses come to my house and want to teach me their stuff, I won't let them. I won't let them do

that. But I confront them as false prophets. That's just...I don't know whether that's what everybody ought to do. That's what I do. I just say, you're false prophets propagating damnable lies representing Satan and I won't hear them. But on the other hand, if you'd like to hear the truth, I'd be more than happy to tell it to you. It's a shock sort of thing. And you have to realize...you're trying to do what the Lord would have done or what Paul would have done, you see these people go along and if everybody just sort of treats them nice and I know there's a balance. You want to be loving and sensitive to them, but they need to be sometimes struck with what's going on. What the reality is, 'cause no one really ever says that to them. And you have to realize that their people just like us and they have all the same emotions and the same doubts, only their doubts are greater than our doubts, because they don't have the truth, and the Lord can't strengthen their faith, because they don't know the Lord. So it's all human. It's a human system. And they have doubts. And sometimes if you can be very strong in confronting them in a loving way, but very strong, you might be able to push them out of it. So I won't let them propagate to me, but if they want to hear what I say, I'll let them do that. Okay.

QUESTIONER: Thank you.

JOHN: All right. Well, good questions. I hope this has been somewhat helpful. You know, the thing that you see when you do this, it's very important to me to do this, because I need to hear what you're asking. But the thing that I see and I don't know...I don't know how to solve it in my own heart is that I know for everyone of these...and we probably only answered a dozen questions.

There have got to be hundreds and hundreds and hundreds more of the same kind of question. And I...I trust the Holy Spirit to put it all together. I...if for nothing else, I wanted to have tonight, tonight this way so that you could feel free to ask anything you wanted to ask. I want to be vulnerable to you. I don't want to feel like...have you feel like you've got to listen to what I want to say. I want to hear what's in your heart, and I appreciate what I hear.

I appreciate the biblical quality and the biblical character of the things that we share together and this is kind of like a family time for us. It's a very important time. And I...I cherish these times to get that kind of feedback. Let me encourage you to write letters to the staff and talk to the elders and your leaders and your flock leaders and the leaders in your...in your fellowship groups and wherever, youth groups and let them know what's in your heart. Let them know what you're feeling.

We want Grace Church to be very, very sensitive to the people and the flock who are the church, who are God's people. Now, this is a small way in which we could do this. Every month or so I hope every month, we'll do it on a Wednesday night as we've always done. And maybe now and then on Sunday, the thing that's the problem on Sunday is we can't cover everybody's questions. It's too many folks to do it. Let me encourage you too, that the tape ministry provides so many things for you. You can get the tapes on so many different subjects and the tape ministry has a subject index

that you can ask them for something on a certain theme, and they'll tell you what tape goes with that theme. You might be able to do that even tonight. The bookstore is loaded with material. And, you know, we have a wonderful bookstore.

Somebody told me the other day we sell more books than any bookstore, any independent bookstore west of the Mississippi. And that's great, people are reading and they're listening to tapes and so there a lot of sources that you can find. So be a student of the Scripture. Build a good Christian library. Get some resource books. Go in and ask for a good book that will be a book you can look up some of these things and a book on theology or a book explaining the Bible or whatever. And begin to cultivate your own study time in these areas.

But I...it's very encouraging, because the kind of questions you ask tell me where your heart is. And your heart's in the Word and you want to know what God says and what God wants and so forth. I'll never forget when NBC was over around here when we were having the crisis about the working wife and all. That one night, I was down there being interviewed by Jess Marlow when he was on Channel 4 and somebody said to me, "you know, the amazing thing we went out and interviewed all these women on the patio and they seemed like intelligent women." That's what he said. They seemed like intelligent women. They just can't believe that we can be intelligent people and believe the things we believe.

And other churches look at us and think we're narrow-minded, straight laced, super fundamentalists, you know, who just over subscribe to everything in Scripture and when we look at it, we look at it as a way of life in which there's tremendous freedom and liberty. Liberty to obey God. Liberty to experience His blessing. And very non-legalistic and yet people are threatened by that. So it's wonderfully comforting to know where you hearts are and where your questions are coming from and to see a cross section of younger and older and men and women and everybody asking questions. That's really great.

Well, we just want to close tonight and nothing formal, just in a word of prayer and we don't normally go...we aren't going to go this late, but when you have questions, sometimes you can't be totally rude to folks and let them go, but I hope you'll be back with us next Sunday night. We're going to go roaring into Romans Chapter 9 and we're going to find out...somebody asked a minute ago about God's love for the whole world and the elect and predestination and we're really going to hit that in Romans 9, so get ready for that. And next Sunday we'll get into Matthew 21. We'll start the Passion of the Lord Jesus Christ as He moves towards the cross. So these are great days ahead for us.

Let's stand for prayer. Father, we thank you that we've been able just to share together as a church family and we really just trusted You to put together the things that You wanted to be done and things that needed to be said. And so Father we pray that we might understand better Your Word, Your truth, Your purpose, Your church, Your will, Your way in our lives and Lord we pray that we might go

out to live in such a way as to bring glory to Your Holy name and will thank you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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