

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

Bible Questions and Answers, Part 28

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 1301-Z

Well, this is just kind of a wonderful evening we've been sharing as a family, looking up and seeing all those bright and shiny little faces, really gives you hope for the future, doesn't it? It's so wonderful. One of the little guys was coming in tonight and he said, "Mr. MacArthur," he said, "do you know how to tie a tie?" And I said yeah. He said, "Well, could you tie my tie?" So, you know, I said sure, no problem at all. And I tied it and the bottom half was longer than the top, I noticed as I was looking up here. You wonder why I wear a vest, that's my problem, see. I can't tie a tie.

So, it's really wonderful, you know, to see these kids that are part of our church family and to know that every Sunday night while we're in here, they're over there having a wonderful time and they're involved in the Search Program which is a program designed to develop character quality in their lives. They have recreation, that's probably not news to you that bring your children, they always want to wear their shoes so they can run in the gym. They sing. They have Bible teaching time. It's really great to see them being developed along the spiritual lines while we're here.

And speaking of that, the last few weeks we've been going through Romans 9 and 10. And it's been really heavy material and we've been kind of moving through it little by little. And in two weeks from tonight, next week the filming, two weeks from tonight we're going to get back and finish up the eleventh chapter. And after 9 and 10 we can welcome the eleventh chapter because it's all about the hope that God has for the future of Israel, the salvation that's coming for that people. And it's going to be a glorious study.

But I thought since we are not going to be able to continue next week, that tonight we'd just set it aside and have a little family time. For you that are visiting with us, it's going to be a little bit informal tonight. And to be honest with you, I don't know whether I've got another sermon left in me after this week. I hear myself echoing in my own mind, I've been speaking so many times. And yet it was a wonderful time.

We were able to share the fact with these folks, we were in Kansas City for a conference with about seven to eight hundred pastors and their wives along with a lot of other folks...and by the way, the conference was on live radio in Kansas City, so we really were reaching a lot of people. But I wanted them to know that Grace Community Church is a normal church. They have the idea that, you know, we're this sort of starched church where everything is perfect and everything happens always the way it ought to happen. And if you've come here, you know that isn't the case. You were here a few

Sunday nights ago when Russ Moore's guitar strings kept breaking and he didn't really know what he was going to do up there, you know. And he was dressed properly, he had a tie and a coat and all, he just couldn't get his guitar to get in line with the standards of the evening. But those kinds of things have happened in our church.

And I was sharing with them a lot of those kinds of things. Somebody commented to me that probably the people at Grace don't even know that happens. And we've tried to keep some of those things a secret from you, to be honest with you. But everything doesn't always happen the way we would like it to happen. And I was sharing with them. Each night I'd share some of the crazy things that happen here at the church. And since we're going to talk about the church, I might just give you a few insights.

But, I remember many things...I remember. In fact, I've threatened to write a book on the absolutely bizarre things that have happened to me here. At least five times that I can think of I have had somebody come up on the platform and try to take over the service. You may remember the last one. The last one that got here later told us that he had come to save me because someone was going to kill me. And we found out that it was himself who was going to kill me and he was sort of schizoid and half of him wanted to kill me and half of him wanted to save my life. And fortunately, by the time he got here, it was the half that wanted to save me that arrived.

And the time before that it was a guy in a pair of gym shorts. Some of you may remember that, who came up on this side and wanted to take over the platform because he had something he wanted to say.

And I remember early in the ministry when I first came here, I was preaching in the chapel and I was waxing eloquent about something and really letting it fly. And I made some very important point and just sealed my point with a pause of punctuation. A guy stood right up and said, "You're wrong and I'd like to take exception to that." I mean, I was aghast. I felt like saying, "Who are you to speak against me," you know, that kind of reaction...I'm in the pulpit, there's only room for one here, you know. This is not a debate. I found out later he was on drugs.

And I don't know if you remember that day that Monnie Brewer was kidnapped. Maybe you don't remember that. But there was an escaped mental patient, somebody had let him out somehow, and he came to the church and...there's a strange thing about people sometimes with a mental disorder, they gravitate toward the church. They talk about God. They talk about Jesus. Anyway, he arrived at the church and kidnapped Monnie. And it was easy for him to do because he was about 245 pounds and he was just as strong as he could be. And he got Monnie in his car. And I don't know how he enticed him into the car, he had a Volkswagen, but he took off down Roscoe Boulevard. And he was drunk, inebriated and he was going all over the road...all over the highway. And Monnie was trying every way he could possible think of to get this guy to stop the car. And so he said to him, "Are

you sure you wouldn't like something else to drink?" That's true, Monroe Brewer said that. The guy thought it was a great idea. Went to the nearest liquor store and Monnie escaped, ran back to the church, came busting through the door over there in just sweating and panting, he was like Dick Mayhue, you understand? Now we know why Dick does this...right? But anyway, but anyway, Monnie came in the door with his eyes as big as saucers and he told us how he had just been kidnapped. It took him a few days to confess how he had escaped, however.

I remember one of my first weddings here. And when it comes to weddings, I'm pretty serious, you know. And I said to this young couple, I said, "May I have the rings, please?" And the best man thought it would be humorous to do something, so into my hand, I always reach my hand over and say, "May I have the rings, please?" He dropped two rings...two plastic rings with a face of a gorilla and two red eyes. And I had in my hand these two gorilla-head rings and I could not keep a straight face. And I just said, "Ha-ha-ha..." And the people seemed to enjoy it, although they didn't even know what was going on, you know.

And one other wedding, the couple had asked for communion and they couldn't find the elements and they put a broken fortune cookie and a little glass of Pepsi, and I had the same reaction when I turned around and picked it up and saw it and I knew it wasn't the right thing, but we were all the way into the wedding, and I knew I was stuck. And I had a very difficult time with that particular situation.

Some of you remember Jim Harris. And Jim is now the pastor of Treasure Valley Bible Church in Boise, Idaho. And Jim was coming along in his preaching ministry and it was his first time to preach at Grace Church. And Jim's about five-foot-five, he's short. He's having, by the way, a wonderful ministry in Boise now, God's really blessed that church. He's on the radio every week and answers all the Bible questions. And one day I was on the radio with him, it was really really fun. I went up for a rally. And he said, "Come, be on my radio program and you can answer the questions instead of me." And a lady called in and I answered the question. And it was a real kind of odd question and I did my best to answer it. And we went off the air for a little commercial, or something, he said, "Hey, John, you know the answer you just gave?" I said yeah. "Wrong answer." I said, "Is that right, Jim?" "Yeah."

So we looked at the Scripture. And I agreed with him. So I said, "You don't need me, this is terrific, I'm going back to Los Angeles, you know, where people don't know whether I give the right or wrong answers." But anyway, I'm glad to see him growing. We had a great time.

But anyway, the first time Jim was preaching, he was so short and the pulpit didn't move up and down in those days, and so we built a little box for him to stand on. And they don't have any doors on the pulpit, it's just an area, you know, where it collects hymn books and old pieces of paper and things like that that collect in pulpits, we keep this one pretty well, but that one used to collect a lot of stuff. And he was standing on this little box, it was somewhat small. And he made a very important point

and hit the pulpit and he did it with such force that he tipped the box over and fell inside the pulpit...completely out of sight. He went completely out of sight. But, fortunately he had a lapel mike on so he never missed a word in his sermon. And everybody was hearing everything as he came crawling back out from under the pulpit. And I want you to know now he has a pulpit that fits him, so that doesn't happen again. He never forgot that.

I remember the first sermon that Darryl DelHousaye preached here. Darryl's now pastor of Scottsdale Bible Church and he was another one of our young men and God has really blessed him over there. I preached there a few weeks ago and he has just a tremendous ministry God's given him there. The first time he preached, in fact, he felt so bad that I think he left town for four days, he just felt so terrible. But one of the...one of the great moments in that sermon was at the very climax of his first sermon and he was at the very point of wanting to make maximum impact. And he said, "Do you know what God thinks of sin?" And right then a man went...took his Kleenex and went..."Snort..." Perfect timing. And Darryl being the master of the moment said, "That's right." I mean, it was classic. In fact, I think we even have it on tape somewhere. So you people don't know all that's gone on around here.

One night I decided that I wanted to do communion differently than I normally did it. Just for a change. And we were over in the chapel and we thought it would be nice to turn the lights down and just have the Lord's table in a different way. And so we got little...about eight-inch long kind of chunks of French Bread, you know how that comes, and give one to each row and the person breaks off a piece and then passes it and breaks off a piece and passes it, and breaks off a piece and says to the next person, "Take this in remembrance of Christ," you know, just a very simple and yet different way to do it.

So we called the ushers forth and they had their little baskets with the bread in them. And they're creatures of habit, ushers are, they really are. They just do their thing and it's the same and they just do it, see. Bless them. So they came down, you know, in the normal pattern and just creatures of habit, they passed the baskets down the row. Beginning to get the picture, right? In three rows they have no bread left because each row is supposed to have one piece of this eight-inch chunk of bread. Instead, the first three rows of people each of them has this huge roll and is sitting there waiting for me to say, "This do in remembrance of Me," and wondering how they're going to jam that thing down and then wash it away with a little tiny sip of grape juice, see. So, I said to them, "Men, would you like to collect the bread and do it the way it's supposed to be done?"

Well, God has given us some wonderful moments as a church, some happy moments. And we need to hear about those happy memories that we have. And it is indeed the ministry, I suppose in one sense, that throws you into the midst of the unexpected all the time...all the time. And yet we rejoice. Some of the things we don't expect are hard to bear and some of them are joyous and they're more joyous the further away we get from them in history. At the moment they were indeed grievous, but

we thank God for those memories, those good times, growing times. All things admittedly then in Grace Church are not always the way they ought to be...in spite of all of our best efforts.

But we want them to be the way God wants them to be. And tonight we want to just take a little time to give you opportunity to ask some questions that you might have and I'm responding really to folks who have been writing in and saying, "When are we going to have time to talk about ministry and so forth and a question and answer time?" And this is the best night we can find in our planning to do that. So, we have three microphones that you can use, and if you'll just step up to a microphone, they'll be a pastor there to just give you a little bit of instruction and kind of help you frame your question. And then we want you to ask whatever question might be on your heart, and I'll do the best I can to answer it.

Now, just one thing we want you to do is try to keep those questions related to the church and its ministry. We want to talk about that tonight. We think that's an important part of our time together. All right? And it would be very helpful to begin things if you'd give your name first and then the pastor who is there will help you sort of simplify your question so we can cover as many as possible.

One other thing along that line. Try to keep your question brief so we can have as many people ask questions as possible. Okay? Looks like you're kind of getting ready. All right, Chris? We'll start on your side. Give us your name first.

QUESTION: Hi, John, my name is Wayne, and my question is from John 13 verse 14 and 15. And it says, "If I then the Lord and the teacher washed your feet and also to wash one another's feet, for I gave you an example that you should also do as I did to you." So my question, John, is do you see this ceremony of foot washing as an observance that should be enjoyed along with the Lord's Supper and also, what does this verse actually mean?

JOHN: Thank you, Wayne. There are some good wonderful evangelical brethren of mine who have believed for many years that the foot washing is an ordinance equal to the Lord's table and to baptism. They see it as an equal ordinance that the church is to carry out. In fact, the Grace Brethren tradition has been..that's a group of churches, the Grace Brethren Churches, you're probably familiar with, good churches, God blessed churches...it's been their tradition through the years not to have the Lord's table without the concomitant foot washing service.

But, I feel that that is not the intention of the passage to teach that foot washing is an ordinance along with communion and baptism. And I suppose the best indicator of that is its absolute absence in the book of Acts. We have no occasion in the book of Acts where the early church ever engaged in a foot washing service, as such. We have no word in any of the Pauline epistles instructing us to do it. There's no letter given to any of the churches telling them this is what they ought to do, although there are many things about baptism, many things about the Lord's table. So I don't think you can put foot

washing on the level that you put the Lord's table and communion...or, the Lord's table and baptism, rather.

Now, backing up from that, what is the Lord saying here? The Lord is saying you are to do as I have done to you. If I then your Lord and master have washed your feet, you ought to also to wash one another's feet for I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you.

Now, the idea of foot washing here was meeting a need. These people had come into a banquet. And in a banquet situation, they reclined at supper. And very often they would recline and so someone's feet would be near someone else's head, or at least they would be raised to some extent. It could be...it could be a very rude thing to come into such a feast with dirty feet, obviously. Wearing sandals, the roads were either dusty or muddy, consequently the feet would be dirty. That was normal, there were no paved roads. And so it was common to have a slave there to wash feet, just a courtesy.

And so, our Lord simply did what was common courtesy. He did what was to provide for the nicest possible environment in which to consume a meal. In our society that wouldn't be a problem. And that is why it says that you should do as I have done to you. Not necessarily what I've done. But you should be as eager in meeting someone's need, in serving someone's simple physical need as I am in serving you. Maybe for us it means getting up from the table to go and get another serving for someone, or to go get a pitcher of water. Maybe it means to provide a seat for them at the table. Maybe it means to provide a place for them to wash their hands. Maybe it means as it would on the road to Damascus to bind up the wounds of a man who has fallen and has a need.

Our Lord is teaching us that we are to meet needs. And I think the sum of it is given in John 13:34, "A new commandment I give you that you love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another." And what He is saying here is you are to love as I have loved. How have I loved? I have loved by meeting your simplest most basic need. Maybe it means giving food to someone who is without food. Maybe it means giving a hand to someone who is struggling in a physical walk. It could mean anything, but that's the essence of what He's saying. Learn to be a servant, learn to be humble, learn to serve someone. And I don't think that's really the issue today. I mean, you can be sure that if people gathered for a foot washing ceremony, they would have washed their feet immaculately before they ever got there. And so it doesn't serve a need, it would only be a symbol.

Now, I wouldn't argue with folks who wanted to do it as a symbolic expression. I would not put it on the level of baptism and communion. And I think if all it is is a symbol, it misses the point that our Lord is saying and that is learn to meet people's basic needs and put yourself in the role of a servant. I mean, let's face it. Washing someone's dirty feet wouldn't be the loftiest thing you could think of to do, it would definitely be the lowliest. And it really suited the occasion here because the disciples were arguing about who was the greatest. And in an argument about who was the greatest, none of

them would wash feet. And Jesus rebukes them by taking off His own garment and He the very Son of God does what they wouldn't do, and says, "Now you see how you're to act." So the very Son of God, God in human flesh, demonstrated a humility that sinful men wouldn't even demonstrate. Okay?

Q: Very good, thank you.

J: Thank you, Wayne. Yes? We're over on the left here. Go ahead, speak right up.

QUESTION: Good evening, John. My name is Richard and in light of the sermon that you had taught to us this morning and forewarned us of the dangers, I went home looking and thinking about some questions...a question or so I might ask you this evening. And I was scanning through a book you had written called Body Dynamics which is a very good book, talking about the church and its ministries. I recommend it for those who wish to read it.

JOHN: Thanks for that commercial.

Q: Anyway, in reading...what was that?

J: Thank you for the commercial.

Q: Oh, okay...well anyway...you're welcome...anyway, in one of the chapters, "Perfecting the Body," you quote as saying, it's used three ways in Scripture, one is positional perfection, ultimate perfection and experiential perfection. Well ultimate...positional perfection as we say like in Colossians chapter 2 verse 10, "You are complete in Him," you know, at salvation, and the same as ultimate John writes, "But we know that when we shall appear...when He shall appear we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is," 1 John chapter 3 verse 2. In other words, through Christ's death and resurrection, those two positions are solidified, I mean, we are positionally....through Christ.

J: Get to your question now.

Q: But I want you to elaborate on the experiential perfection and the results of experiential perfections leading up to Ephesians 4 chapter...verses 15, 16.

J: What he is saying is reacting to something that I think the Bible teaches. When we talk about perfecting the saints in Ephesians 4, we read Ephesians 4 that the Apostles, prophets, evangelists, teaching pastors, verse 11, are for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry.

Now what does it mean to perfect the saints? In what sense are believers perfected? And I suggest there are three different dimensions to that. First of all, there is ultimate perfection. In other words, there is the day when we will be like Jesus Christ, right? First John 3:2, we'll see Him, be like Him, we shall see Him as He is. We will be ultimately perfect. We have that promise in Christ, that He

which hath begun a good work in us will...what?...perform it until...when?...the day of Jesus Christ when we become ultimately perfect. So bound up in our salvation is ultimate perfection. We can't do anything about that now. We can't be ultimately immediately perfect, sinless, flawless now. God does that in the future. So whatever it is that I'm to do in perfecting the saints, it's not to make you ultimately perfect in the sense of eternity because God has to do that in the future.

The second kind of perfection is what I call positional perfection. And that is to say there's a sense in which when you became a believer you became perfect in the eyes of God...positionally. In other words, because you have the righteousness of Christ, because the robe of Christ's righteousness is put over you, God sees you in Christ and He sees Christ's perfection in you. You understand what I'm saying? In other words, God can accept you into a relationship with Him, a relationship of intimacy because you're in Christ. And you're purified in that relationship. So positionally, that is in my position, or as the old theologians used to call it, "in my state before God," in my standing before God, I stand before Him as one who is perfect, that's positional perfection. I will become one who is perfect, that's ultimate perfection.

The only remaining one is experiential perfection. And that is to say I will some day be perfect, I am now in the eyes of God positionally perfect, but I need now practically to be perfected. You understand those distinctions? So that in my life now, I'm not trying to...I'm not trying to earn a better standing with God. I have a perfect standing with God in Christ, right? I'm not trying to gain absolute and ultimate perfection, that will only happen in glory. But I am trying to get better and better and better and become more like Christ, more like Christ, more like Christ in this life.

And the reason it's important to distinguish those things is, one, if you confuse them with ultimate perfection, you're going to come up with the kind of theology that says in this life you can become ultimately perfect. And there are people that believe that. I don't know if you know that, but Wesleyan theology or as known Armenian theology believes that a Christian in this life can obtain sinless perfection. And they call it the eradication of sin. They believe...I've met them. I had a man tell me he had not sinned in many, many, many years. He had eradicated his sin nature by obtaining perfection in this life.

Now if you believe that, you've really got a problem because the Bible does not teach that. So when we talk about perfection, we're not talking about ultimate perfection, that is absolute sinlessness. We can't work to that point in this life. Nor are we talking about positional perfection because, you see, I can't do anything to make God like me better. You understand that?

Because He loves me perfectly in Christ, right? I can't become in better standing with God. I am already one of His children, right? I'm already in His family. I'm already the possessor of His Holy Spirit. So in my standing before God, I can't get any better. I can't make Him love me more. I can't make Him save me more. I can't...I can't increase my standing with Him because that is set because

I'm in Christ. And I stand in Christ perfect in terms of my standing. So the one area I'm going to work on, I'm not going to make God like me better, He already loves me perfectly. I'm not going to...I'm not going to make Him accept me more, He accepts me totally in Christ so that what I do in this life doesn't make God like me better, doesn't make God accept me more, He accepts me perfectly. And it isn't going to make me perfect. But what it is going to do is move me step by step to be more like Jesus Christ. And that's the idea of experiential perfection. You're simply moving along to become more and more and more like Jesus Christ.

And what is it that does that in your life? Well, tribulation is one thing...somebody said tribulation. First Peter says after you have suffered a while the Lord will make you perfect, 1 Peter 5:10. So suffering is part of that, trials, because trials are like spiritual muscle building, aren't they? I mean, you put...you have to carry the weight and the load of the trial and that stretches your muscles. When you go through trials, James says, you therefore ought to count it all...what? Joy because the trying of your faith has a perfect work, or a perfecting work. So trial suffering is one element, the other is in 2 Timothy 3:16, where it says all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and then it says a few things about what it will do, that the man of God may be...what?...perfect. So trials, and the Word. God brings the trials and we try to bring you the Word. That's not my job to bring you the trials. I'm not supposed to make you suffer, God will do that. I'm supposed to give you the Word.

So, the Word and suffering brings you along the line of experiencing perfection so that hopefully you can become more and more like your position and closer and closer to your ultimate perfection. Okay? Yes.

QUESTION; My name is Muriel and I'd like to know how does our church stand on divorce? If a wife gets a divorce on Bible grounds, her husband having had adultery with another women, is she free to marry someone else?

JOHN: Yes, this is a very important question. What is the church's position on divorce. And the church's position basically has not changed through the years. It's the same position that the church has always held. And it is the position that has been most commonly held throughout the years of the church's history. And that is that there are revealed in Scripture very clear instructions as to the fact that God hates divorce. There's no way around that. God hates divorce...not some divorce...what?...all divorce. It's all the same in the sense that he hates it because it violates the one man/one woman for life concept which God ordained in Genesis chapter 2 as normal for man. God hates divorce.

Now, there are some circumstances in which divorce becomes a merciful granting for the sake of an innocent party. And I believe those are the only biblical exceptions. And they would be then on this basis. Where you have one partner in a marriage, according to Matthew 5, Matthew 19, the key passages on this, where you have one unfaithful partner in a marriage who is engaged in acts of

sexual sin outside that marriage, there is an allowance for divorce. It is an allowance for unending unfaithfulness.

If, for example, a person committed one act of adultery, violated a marriage once or twice, came back and wanted to repent, then I don't think it would be right to divorce the person. I don't think we're looking for a person to do something wrong once and then that's a loophole and we get rid of him. The spirit of Hosea must be brought into play. You remember Hosea married a wife, she turned out to be a harlot and he pursued her, and pursued her and pursued her and finally took her back and called her a virgin, forgave all of her harlotries and they were myriad harlotries.

So, there should be forgiveness. But where there is hard- hearted incessant unrepentant kind of adultery that's unresolved, the innocent party at that point, I believe, is freed out of that relationship. Now you say, "On what basis?" Because that's basically what Jesus said. If you divorce for any reason other than fornication, you cause the person when they remarry to commit adultery. If fornication is the case, it is not adultery. And Moses said it is because of the hardness of your...what?...your heart that God allowed this. In a case where the adultery cannot be resolved. But you take a situation, for example, you have a person, their partner commits adultery, adultery, adultery, they can't reconcile, the person is not going to stop that life style, I think mercifully God will free that innocent party and the freedom means to remarry. I think that's the basic idea.

Let me tell you another point you need to keep in mind. The Old Testament, what was God's law for an adulterer? Death. Now very clearly if you have a dead partner, you're free to remarry, right? Now listen...listen. Just because God is merciful and does not kill the guilty party, if God lets that guilty party live, there's no reason to believe that He intends by being merciful to the guilty party to sentence the innocent party to an entire life of singleness. It would be as if the innocent person because God was merciful and didn't kill the guilty one, the innocent person has to spend their entire life suffering. Whereas if God did what His law demanded and killed that person, they'd be free to remarry. So where God is merciful and doesn't take the life of an adulterer who will not repent, I believe there is freedom to remarry. And I believe that's what our Lord is saying in Matthew 5 and Matthew 19. But keep in mind, that's a last resort where forgiveness doesn't have any effect, where there's no restoration and where that adultery cannot be...cannot be resolved.

And then there's one other situation and that's in 1 Corinthians 7 where you have an unbeliever who wants out of the marriage, they want out of the union, they leave the union in 1 Corinthians 7, Paul says if an unbeliever departs, let him depart, a brother is not in bondage in such cases. You're not bound to that person anymore. Those are the only two situations the Bible gives where divorce is tolerated. And keep in mind it is a concession, it is a merciful concession to a person sinned against where it cannot be resolved. And that's what this church believes and that's what we've always believed.

There are people today who teach no divorce, no remarriage, no time, but I don't think they deal fairly with the Word of God in those regards. I mean, I wish we could come to that viewpoint, it would simplify everything, we wouldn't have to counsel anybody...just, that's it. But it isn't that simple. We have to take what the Word of God has to say. Okay? See over here.

QUESTION: John, my name is Brian and we wanted to know, were those incidents you told us, were those going to be on the tape also?

JOHN: You mean what I said tonight?

Q: Yeah.

J: Oh, I don't know. Should we put those on the tape? Sure, we'll put them on the tape.

Q: Okay, I had a Bible question, also. It's out of 1 Peter 5:5. It reads, "You younger men likewise be subject to your elders." And what I wanted to know is, first of all, why does he pick out just younger men, and also what does it mean as a young man to be subject to an elder?

J: Well, the whole passage here is talking about leaders in the church, the whole passage in 1 Peter 5, the elders, actually the presbuteros, the mature, godly men who lead the church, says Peter, who am also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that should be revealed. And then he's instructing the elders and he says, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, take the oversight." We learn here that elders are also feeders, and that's the idea of pastoring, they're also overseers, that's the word episkopos, or bishop. So we are to take oversight, feed the flock, lead the flock and not by constraint. In other words, not because somebody forced you to do it, but willingly, and not for money. Don't ever go into any ministry for money, but because of an eager heart and eager mind. And don't lord it over the charge allotted to you, don't rule them with a rod of iron, don't be a dictator, but just be an example. It's leadership by example.

And then when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, the chief pastor, the pastor above all pastors, you'll receive a crown of glory that fades not away. In like manner, you younger submit yourselves unto the elder.

All it's simply saying here is that there are in the church those godly men who are mature men, spiritual leaders in the church, and those who are younger than they are and under them should submit to them. It's just a very simple spiritual principle. Ye younger submit to the elder. And then he adds this principle, "All of you be subject one to another and be clothed with humility for God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble." As long as he's talking about elders, he just adds another word and says, "Look, all of you that are younger should submit to those who are in

leadership over you and everybody ought to have a heart of submission, everybody ought to have a heart of humility because God resists those that are proud and gives grace to those that are humble." So if you want to receive the grace of God, and what he means by that is not just the grace of salvation, but the grace of blessing, the grace of pouring out favor and benediction on us, if we want to receive that, we want to act in humility. We need to learn to be submissive.

It's kind of like Ephesians 5 which says, "Submit yourselves one to another." But one of the basic principles in the church is submission to the elders. You see it in Hebrews chapter 13 where it says, "Submit to those who are over you in the Lord. Bring your life into harmony underneath them. Follow their example, follow their lead. Follow their teaching for they have to give an account to God," it says in Hebrews 13:17. So it's just a call for folks who are under the leadership of mature godly men to follow that lead. And particularly it can be applied even that younger man should follow older men who are spiritual examples, obviously.

Titus has a lot to say. You might compare Titus chapter 2 with that. Okay.

Bill, did you have a question?

QUESTION: Yes...

Bill wants to know how long you've known Jesus and when were you baptized?

JOHN: Oh, okay. Bill, let's see. You know, when I was a little kid, just as a little boy, my family taught me all about Jesus all the time. As a little kid I sang songs about Jesus and I remember having a little zipper Bible, you remember those little Bibles that had a zipper on the outside and I used to learn about Jesus and my teachers in Sunday School taught me about Jesus. And when I was about...I think about ten years old, one time my dad was preaching in a certain town and I went out of the church after my dad preached and I sat down on the steps with my dad. And I said...I had listened to him preach, and I said, "Dad, I think I need Jesus in my heart...I think I need to ask Him into my life." I had done something wrong and I felt very bad about it and I wanted Jesus to forgive me and so on the steps in that...of that church, it was in a little farm town called Zier(?), Indiana, I don't know if any of you ever heard of it, that I sat on those steps and first prayed a conscious prayer that I can remember to receive Jesus Christ into my life. And that was a long time ago. I'm forty-four, aren't I, dear? Forty-four.... It's tough for a young woman to be married to an old man like this. But I'm forty-four, so that's thirty-four years ago, about, that I really first opened my heart to Christ.

And then later on when I was 18, I had a car accident, was almost killed, thrown out of a car, slid a hundred and twenty- five yards down a highway. Wound up in a bed for three months and during that time really came to grips with what it meant to really obey Christ. So I've known Him a long time.

And I was baptized by my own Dad when I was a little guy, some time after I received Christ. Okay?

Q: Yes, thank you.

J: You're welcome, Bill. And Bill received the Lord not long ago, too. Right? Just a little while ago. Yeah, God bless you, Bill.

QUESTION: Hi. My name is Ed. My question comes out of Matthew 18:20, "Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst." A lot of churches use that as a definition of what constitutes a church. And this church doesn't, and I'd like to know why. And also the, what does constitute a church?

JOHN: Well, Matthew chapter 18 verse 20 has nothing to do with what constitutes a church. I grew up hearing that verse used for prayer meetings, "Where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst," have you heard that? Boy, where two or three are gathered together, the Lord is in the midst. Listen, where I am all by myself, the Lord is in the midst cause He's in the midst of me. I don't need anybody else for that. That's sort of that old hermeneutic, you know, that just says you take the verse and yank it out of the context and let it, you know. You have to take a verse in its context, Ed. Every verse is a part of the whole.

Did you ever have a, when you were a kid if you were a Christian in a Christian family, did you ever have a little plastic box with Bible verses in it? My grandmother had one on the table and it had a whole bunch of little verses and you can put them in any order you wanted, you just move them around. They were little verses...and this went here, little verses all disconnected. And I grew up kind of thinking the Bible is a whole bunch of verses that really never connected. But when you study the Bible as we do, you find it has flow, you find it has context. So no verse can be isolated from its context.

I remember reading a book where a guy said women shouldn't have the hair on the top of their head because it says in Matthew 24, "Top not come down." It does, it says that. But the context is let those on the house top not come down. So if you just cut it up the way you want it, you can even get into women's hairdos. You can do anything. The old story of the Bible says "And Judas went out and hanged himself, go thou and do likewise and what thou doest, do quickly." That's all in the Bible but it's hooked up wrong...see.

But that's...believe me, folks, that's very common. I mean, what people do with the Bible is a travesty. I don't know why I'm waxing eloquent on this, Ward Brien told me I should do this, where is he? Oh, over there...but we just spent a week together. But that's a travesty on the Bible and it happens all the time. People misuse and abuse the Bible over and over and over again. And one of the things

they do is pull it out of context, and they mean well.

What it's talking about here is if you go back to verse 16, it says if a person has sinned in the church, they've sinned, it says it right here, if they have sinned, you go to him, tell him the fault alone. If he hears you, you've gained your brother. If he doesn't listen, if he doesn't repent from the sin, then take one or two more that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. The Deuteronomics of the Old Testament said that truth was established in the mouth of two or three witnesses. So when you go to someone and they don't hear you and turn from their sin, you collect a couple of more people and the three of you go and you confront them with their sin and you trust that they repent. And then you bring back the report of whether they did or didn't. And in the mouth of two or three witnesses, the report is confirmed.

And you say, "Boy, oh boy, that's kind of hard to do." And so He reminds you in verse 20 that where two or three are gathered together in My name, I'm in the midst. And it has nothing to do with a prayer meeting, it has to do with confronting a person about their sin. That's what it has to do with. You can be sure that when you've gone to someone with two or three spiritual people and confronted them with their sin, you're not acting on your own, Christ is there in the midst acting with you. In other words, He wants the church pure even more than you do, right?

It's a very wonderful principle. What it says...you know, we pray the Lord's prayer, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven," if we really meant that we'd be wanting to do down here what heaven's doing up there. And when you go to discipline someone for sin and take a couple of folks with you to confront them about their sin, Christ is in the middle because that's what heaven is doing, too. Heaven has that view of sin. So it has to do with two or three witnesses confronting a person in sin and we can do that knowing Christ is in the midst doing it. That's the context, okay?

Yes...no, we'll go to this side first...yes?

QUESTION: Hi, John. My name is Jerry.

JOHN: Hi, Jerry.

Q: Your ministry is widespread and I understand that your basic thrust is that people know what the Bible means by what it says. Paul says in Acts 20, "I did not shrink from declaring the whole purpose of God." Later in the same passage he said in verse 31, "Therefore be on the alert remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one of you with tears." So there's two things. There's doctrine and admonition.

What I wanted to know is what do you feel is the proper balance of these two major elements of your teaching ministry? And what is your understanding of the need for this assembly to be admonished,

similar to what you did this morning?

J: Well, I don't know that I could be a good example of the perfect balance. I...that's something that's orchestrated in many ways by the Spirit of God. I mean, I feel there has to be that balance. I don't feel. You know, people say to me, "Boy, you know, you're so opinionated," and so forth, and you know, when we did the series on spiritual gifts and the series on tongues and the radio stations took us off the air...I don't know if you knew that, they took us right off the air in many cities. And they put out disclaimers, you know, that I was doing this and doing that. But I feel that part of the ministry and the balance of the ministry is to warn people. There are a lot of folks today who are threatened by that, who don't think I should do that. They think I'm stepping over my bounds. And I was telling some folks recently, "You know, you can get on the radio and you could advocate anything and people wouldn't mind. I mean, you could say spirituality occurs when you put on a little hat with a helicopter prop on it. Or, spirituality occurs when you put beans in your nose." I mean, you could say anything and people would say, "Oh, that's new...that's new." And nobody would quibble about it. They let anybody on there to say anything.

But if you get on there and you question anything that is being said, they want to pull you off because you're not loving. The most loving thing you can do is tell the truth. And people got very upset when I would mention on the air, I think I mentioned several different people on the air, Katherine Kuhlman(?) at one point as one who couldn't heal, and people just get aghast...how dare you touch God's anointed. But I believe I'm mandated by God at some point to be confrontive about these matters. So, you try to find a balance and be loving about it. You know, I guess, you know, I want to believe that my heart is right, but I do get very exercised about things and I sometimes feel like I'm a prophetic person. When I read the Puritans, or when I read the Old Testament prophets or whatever, I feel like I was born in the wrong period of time, I'd have been much more tolerated. In fact, I'd have been sort of soft in some other eras of history.

But at this particular time because there's such a widespread ecumenism, there's such a widespread tolerance of false teaching and false doctrine in the name of quote/unquote "Christian sentimentalism," people who speak the truth and confront the truth may find it difficult. But all I can say in answering your question is, I want to teach and I want to warn. I want to do both. And the Holy Spirit has to sort of bring that balance about in my own life. And that's what happened this morning, just the prompting of the Spirit of God.

Q: Thank you.

J: Thank you. Yes.

QUESTION: John, my name is Mendis and with all due respect, I want to ask you or not the personal believers in this church but why is Grace Church not helping us raise the Hollywood cross up? I don't

know if you're even aware of what's happening with it. But that just baffles my mind. As a believer all I've learned from you and I'm trying to do my best to go out there and do what I think is God's work and we have total non-commitment from Grace Church as far as the cross is concerned.

JOHN: Well, the only thing I can say in answer to your question why we don't raise the Hollywood cross, they're trying to put a cross back up on a hill in Hollywood?

Q: Why don't you help raise it...help raise it.

J: Oh...well, let's see. I don't want to speak in behalf of the whole church because I'm sure the whole church doesn't know even someone's trying to raise up the Hollywood cross. Maybe there's some folks who would like to do that, I don't know. We've never brought that to anybody's attention. But apparently there used to be a cross down by the Hollywood Bowl and the Pilgrimage Playhouse, or something, that was up on the side of the hill. And there's people who want to put that cross back up there as a testimony?

Q: Right.

J: Is that the idea? Well, you know, that might be a helpful testimony in some cases. I don't want to speak in behalf of the whole church. I guess you're sort of caught with the idea of what your priorities are. And I'm not sure that that's...that would be the top of my priority list, or the priority list of Grace Community Church. Something like that I'm quite confident I can speak on behalf of the elders and say that the elders would be happy to see a cross up there, but wouldn't necessarily want to commit ourselves to that as the priority of what we ought to be doing.

In other words, a cross on a hill makes a statement but it's a rather muffled one because it can be seen from so many vantage points. I just don't see it as an overt testimony or an overt proclamation of the Word of God. So it would be a priority issue. And I wouldn't fault somebody who was concerned about it. But I can only assume from what I know about the elders in the church here that that would not be a priority issue for us. Now if in fact it is for someone else an opportunity to give a testimony, then you've made your point and they can see you afterwards and maybe they want to help with that.

Q: I understand. But could I ask you why you even stop us from distributing leaflets about it on the church grounds? We were told not to do that.

J: Well, did you try to distribute leaflets on the church grounds?

Q: Well we have to do it on the street because we weren't allowed to do it here.

J: Yes, we have a basic rule here and a basic principle and that is that we don't let people distribute leaflets on the cars in the parking lot. And the reason for that is because we have had in the past some very very offensive situations take place where things were put on the cars that were totally unacceptable, totally out of line, not only very condemning of the gospel we preach but of our church and so forth and so on. And assaulting people's minds is not something that we want to expose people to who come here to worship God. So if you're in a public place, that's fine and they can take it or leave it. But when it's put in their cars, I believe it's an intrusion into their own privacy. And so we have had a basic principle in our church that we don't allow anyone to distribute anything on the cars period, whether it's good, bad or indifferent. And we're not in a position when people like that show up to make an instant evaluation of how effective or how helpful it might be.

Q: I understand, but I'm talking about church grounds like over here by the doors or...

J: Right, same thing. Anywhere on the church grounds.

Q: But it's a Christian work, isn't it? I mean, the cross is everybody's cross, is our city's cross.

J: Okay...okay, I answered your two questions, fair enough?

Q: Okay...can we...will you reconsider...we'll ask, will you reconsider in the future for us to make a presentation to the people here...possibly?

J: You just made a presentation to 2,600 people. Fair enough?

Q: Fair enough.

J: All right, next.

QUESTION: Hi, my name is Melissa. I had a...I very much agree with when it says in the Bible about women are not allowed to preach in the church.

JOHN: Good.

Q: How do you...how do you condone...or how does the Bible condone about the prophetesses in the Bible, like Deborah and those?

J: Yeah. Well, the Bible definitely teaches that there were at periods of time in the history of the church prophetesses. I mean, obviously, as you mentioned, Huldah, Deborah--significant leader in the Old Testament--there were many women who were dynamic in God's kingdom, in the advance of that kingdom. Certainly Esther was a unique personality, although she wasn't a preacher as such.

We don't know even that Huldah had some great platform from which she articulated. We know God spoke to her and in some way she passed that on. The four daughters of Philip in the book of Acts are said to have prophesied. We don't know if they did that all the time or if they only did that once, or twice. And we don't know whether they took a platform and preached every week, we assume they did not. They are not pastors.

But all that notwithstanding. You may have certain women that God uses in the Old Testament, certain women that God uses in the New Testament and there will be certain women that God uses today in very unique roles of leadership...not only in our own culture but all around the world, in missions and many other places. But what we have to deal with is a very clear and very precise statement, having had all those examples and having left it with God if He wishes at any given point to bring up someone who by His own anointing has a special place, we still have to follow the very clear teaching of Scripture and not violate it and that clear teaching is found in 1 Timothy chapter 3 verse...chapter 2 verse 12...verse 11, "Let the women learn in silence with all subjection and I permit not a woman to teach nor to take authority over the man but to be in silence."

Now what does this refer to? Over to verse 15 of chapter 3. "This is how you ought to behave yourself in the house of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Now Paul writes to Timothy instruction about the church. When the church comes together in its duly defined meeting and assembly for worship and instruction, a woman is not allowed to teach. That is the statement here. That's for this day and this age. There may be times when God will bring a woman into a very unique place to communicate His message in a very special way outside these kinds of limits. That might be the exception that God would choose to do in any time. But nonetheless, we as a church cannot violate that clear instruction.

And again I say, whatever Huldah did in revealing God's Word, we don't know that she stood up and took authority over men. We don't know how she may have revealed that message, what the context was. The same would be true of the daughters of Philip. That's the other New Testament exception. And by the way, the only New Testament exception that I can think of off hand of a woman except for Aquila and Priscilla. And Priscilla in private conversation shared what she knew with Apollos. And that's perfectly acceptable cause that's not in the constituted meeting of the church.

But those exceptions don't in any sense obviate this principle. And we have no indication even in the travels of the Apostle Paul or of the...of Peter and John in the first twelve chapters that a woman ever articulated the gospel...that a woman ever preached the gospel...that a woman ever instructed in the matters of discipleship. Prophetesses were just women specially given a message from God and may have been at one moment or another as a special...in the special course of God's design.

Okay?

Q: Okay. Thank you.

J: Now I want to add a footnote because people misunderstand this. I'm not against women. I mean, I'm just trying to say this is what the Bible says, the same old deal, you can take it or leave it. If you want to argue with the Bible, now you've compromised yourself. Does this undermine the role of a women...of women? Not in the least. This puts women where God wants them. And He has a very special role for them as this very text says, "She shall be saved in child bearing."

In other words, you say, "Okay, the men do all the instruction, the men do all the teaching." Yes, but for the first five years of life who does all the influencing? The woman. And if we teach to influence the world, then women mother to influence the world. And if we influence the men who are the leaders, then women influence other women...older women teaching younger women...and children.

So, we influence men and men are put in the headship. Women influence women and women are put in the submissive role. And yet the balance comes because we give the verbiage and women give the influence. And it's a wonderful thing. So women are saved from any second-class thought by virtue of that. And they have a marvelous role that a man can't fulfill. They have a tenderness, they have a ministry to women that men can't understand. And that's very important to keep in mind.

Yes?

QUESTION: Hi, John, my name is Barbara. This morning you mentioned the sin of worldliness. And very often it's hard...

JOHN: I mentioned what?

Q: The sin of worldliness.

J: Yes...the sins of worldliness. Okay.

Q: The sins...okay. Very often it's hard to sight specific worldly...worldly attitudes because what one person considers to be worldly isn't worldly to another. Let me give three examples.

In a few of the fellowship groups here they have made an announcement concerning a Christian ocean liner cruise where you pay approximately a thousand dollars just for a week of...a week of relaxation, bathing in the sun, good fellowship and the brochure that goes along with this pictures as one of the pictures a chef with every gourmet delicacy in front of him.

Also, when it comes to modesty in dress we seem to have different concepts of what is drawing attention to ourselves and distracting others and what isn't.

Also, we get together a large number of people in order to have fellowship and unity, spending a little over three thousand dollars on food and entertainment which is including building like the platform for the entertainment and the accessories that go along there. A lot of the food is thrown away and we sing Beach Boy songs for the majority of the evening. But we do have...it's a good clean time.

Some think all this is good clean fun and in case...and in the case of the dress code, one is just looking one's best is the reasoning.

JOHN: Okay, I understand where you're going.

Q: Okay, others feel that a worldly mentality is subtly becoming condoned without realizing how far we are from exemplifying our calling, as stated in 1 Peter 2:9, being a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation that we may proclaim His excellencies. My question is are there guidelines or standards by which we can determine if what we are doing is the subtly of worldliness luring us away from a fervent passion for Christ.

J: Yeah, you're asking a fair enough question. Let me give you the answer. All the things you've mentioned to me basically, all the things you just mentioned to me that I can think back on, none of them in my judgment would be indicated in Scripture to be a sin. Riding in a boat is not a sin. Eating a meal isn't a sin. Riding in a boat isn't a sin cause everybody in the Bible that you can think of rode a boat. Okay. Eating a nice meal isn't a sin because everybody has to eat. And if you're going to eat it, it might as well be nice as well as be terrible. And all things are to be received with thanksgiving. And God has given us an infinite array of foods to demonstrate His infinite blessing, His infinite love, that's why we don't all eat porridge three meals a day and live in a gray world with a gray sky and no color, God is a God of variety and He has enhanced this world with much beauty.

God has given us money, not only for sober-minded purposes but that we may enjoy the wonder of His creation and that we may enjoy the rest of recreation and many, many other things. And what I'm saying in saying all of that...and God has given us music and whatever...in saying all of that, let me just say this. Worldliness can be simply defined in the first category as that which is sinful. So you're not asking about that. That's clear. In other words, we don't want to engage in anything that is sinful.

And when it comes to boat rides and meals and how you spend your money and so forth, then it becomes a matter of individual conscience and individual attitude. Now let me just say it in a simple sentence. Worldliness basically is an attitude. It is an attitude other than receiving from the Lord or seeking to glorify the Lord. You can look at my life and say, "Look, you don't need that coat." My wife gave me this coat for Christmas, you say, "You don't need that coat. You only need one coat, you only need one pair of pants." True? I can only wear one coat and one pair of pants...all I can wear is one tie, I can get a new one if it gets dirty, forget the rest. You say, "Why do you have two coats,

three coats, four coats, five coats?"

Most of the suits I have were given to me. Okay. So you say, "You don't need that." Well, is that for you to determine for me or am I free before God and those things which He provides to enjoy them? Does my wife have the freedom to give me a coat as much as a Proverbs 31 woman has the freedom to make coats out of the finest goods for her family? Or should she just throw burlap on them and say, "Stay spiritual?"

See, so you're really...you're asking a very, very personal question and you can't extrapolate from there. Now I have this basic principle, and Patricia and I talk about this all the time, we never ask for anything therefore we can receive anything as a gift from God. I can get on a boat and take a trip on a boat and I can see it as an opportunity to teach the Word of God, to reach lost people, to enjoy God's creation, to cultivate a deepening relationship with my wife, to take advantage of the glories of a world that my Lord created that I want to see. If my heart attitude is right and I'm not indulging my flesh in seeking greater comfort than I should have and gluttony and drunkenness and all of that...see, it's an attitude, it's what in the heart.

I mean, there are some people, to be honest with you, who have a lot of resources that God has given to them and you'd never know they had anything. They're storing it all away. And I'm not sure that's more virtuous, maybe that most virtuous of it all, of course, would be to invest it all in the kingdom. But I do think there's a dimension of life that God intends for us to enjoy and to be good stewards. As best we can...I don't know what you're talking about with \$3,000.00 for platforms and foods and I don't know what you're talking about a thousand dollar boat rides and things, I'm not familiar with those things going on here. I know I've been invited to go on those boats and teach and if you do that once, you'd probably have had enough of those boats. It's hard to teach standing up when, you know, that's going on. But nonetheless, it's a great opportunity.

But anyway, you want to notice it when you're not dealing with overt sin, when you're dealing in the gray area of what do I do with my money, what kind of clothes do I buy, I mean, you can condemn anybody for anything. If we're not standing here in sandals and rags, we could all get shot down, right? So, you know, you've got to give a little latitude to enjoy the wonder of God's creation and the blessed things that He's given.

I don't know how you are, but I thank the Lord for the things He's given me. I mean, I could live in a shack with paper walls and I'd be perfectly happy. My wife could tell you that. I don't care about money, about any of that stuff. And she knows, she tells me that..."Why is it that you don't, you know, take more thought about that sometimes?" And I just don't care about it. It doesn't matter to me, it's only money...you have it, you have it...you don't have it, you don't have it. What's the difference? That's not life for me. Life is ministry. Life is family. Life is Patricia and my kids and you and what God wants me to do in the Word and I don't care about that.

But if God blesses me and He gives me a home and He gives me clothes and He gives me these kinds of things, then for me it's an opportunity to say Thank You, Lord, I don't need all these things and neither did Abraham need all that God gave him. But if his heart was right, then God was glorified because His heart was right, see. So you're talking about an attitude situation, that's all. And that's the way you have to deal with it. Worldliness is clear-cut in matters of sin. In other areas, it's how you take those things. If you take your whole life pursuing those things, pursuing those gluttonous things, pursuing fancy food, pursuing fancy places, pursuing all of that, and that's the golden drive of your life, that's worldliness. But if you can enjoy those things, and that's why everything you do needs to be prayerfully done and prayerfully considered.

Okay. We're...it's out of time already. So what I'm going to do is just take the three people that are right in the front of the line. Doesn't this go fast? Did I spend a lot of time talking at the beginning or something? Thank you for coming and trying to ask your question...okay?

QUESTION: Hi, John. My name is Derrick. Occasionally during sermons I get to hear a little bit about your desire to see the San Fernando Valley reached with the gospel of Christ and Grace's part in that. And I just wondered if you'd mind just taking a minute or two just sharing your heart attitude for how you would see us in the church involved in reaching the valley. What the goals and plans for the elders are?

JOHN: I'm so glad you asked that. I...you know, I feel a special responsibility in my own heart for this area. I really do. And we're trying to crisscross this area a lot of ways. We have radio in the city of Los Angeles and God has brought us some wonderful people through that. Some people have come to Christ through that.

But the real key to reaching this valley, it's always been the same for me. When I first came to Grace Community Church, I remember the first time I ever met with the board, I preached here, Dr. Elvy had died of a heart attack, I came just to fill the pulpit one Sunday night, Paul Sailhamer was the youth director at that time, I had spoken at a high school camp, he said, "Can you preach for us some Sunday?" I came and preached and a man came up to me, Bob Barrel(?) who is now down in Arizona and dear friend, he was the chairman of the elder board at that time. Anyway, he said to me, "Would you consider being the pastor here?" And at that time there were four or five hundred people here at Grace Church, it was a wonderful church. And they had a vision to reach this valley. And I said, "That's what I'd...if God leads in that way, that's what I'd like to do. I'd really like to see us reach this valley for Christ...let this valley know that Jesus Christ is alive and offers salvation."

And I said at that time, "But I believe there's a way to do that. And the way to do that is not to panic and go running all over the place, like mad. The way to do that is to build a group of people whose lives are so powerful and so viable and so dynamic for Christ that they affect this valley by the very

life they live."

And you know, we thank God that that's what happened in the first ten years that I was here, this church doubled every two years...500, 1,000, 2,000, 4,000...it just doubled, and even 8,000 to the number of people that started coming to the church. And it was because of the testimony of individual people out there in the community. And every Sunday as I stand in that visitor's line, people come by and they say, "I'm new here, this is my first time." Well, how did you come? "Oh, I worked beside someone who goes here," or, "Someone who goes here is next...lives next door to me." That happened, I think, a half a dozen times or more...maybe a dozen times this morning I met people who were brought by someone they worked with, brought by someone they lived by. "I saw her life, I saw what she had...that's what I need in my own life."

One young man came by and tears coming down his face, he said, "I have to get back to God, I have to find my way back. I...I've drifted so far away and some people told me this is the place that I could come." See, that's the dynamics of it all.

And, of course, we also are aggressive in training people for evangelism to go out and reach them. But we want to reach them every way we can. We dropped a little ad in the paper just so if anybody was looking for a church, they'd have a choice with all the whackos that are listed in the Daily News, they could at least sort out one little deal where somebody could go and learn the Bible straight. And even though it, you know, it probably costs us, I don't know what it costs, 75 bucks a week, Jay, or something like that? And you...but if...what's the price of a soul? If one person looks in there and they find these crazy people, Emmet King out here, who knows what he's talking about? Science of mind, and...do you ever look at those? Christadelphians, and the... I mean, do you know what it would be like if you wanted to find the truth and just went to the church page and said, "I'm going to go to a church?"

Two people...two different people this morning said to me, "We've been looking for a church, this is where we want to be. We found that out this morning. It's unlike any church we've ever come to." Well, so we want a little visibility.

But anyway possible we can do it. We try to do it with all of our programs, recreation programs, AWANA programs, get the kids in, teach them Bible verses, send them home into unsaved homes and have them mumbling Bible verses to their parents and all that, you know. So, we want to reach this valley and this whole city. And they're aware we're here, they really are aware we're here.

You'd be amazed when something happens in the city that's of significant news, they will call here and they want us to comment on what we think about it. Because they...in fact, as one CBS reporter told me one time, "You are sound...you seem like a sane fundamentalist." That's what he said.

So, you know, the city...the city is aware we're here. And we have you people out there in all these various places and that's how we want to reach the valley.

QUESTION: Hi, my name is Paul. I have a quick question out of Titus 1 verse 5 where Paul says to Titus, "For this cause I left...for this cause left I thee in Crete that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee." And if it was up to Titus to appoint elders, my question is, is that the standard and how is it done here at Grace?

JOHN: Okay, let me suggest what you do. I just wrote a book on elders and I've been waiting to do this for 15 years, really, and I finally got pressed and we had an elders retreat and I said I'm going to put together this thing. And I put it together. And I hammered it out with the men there. And then I finally wrote it and put it in print. It's a little thing and I think they have it in the bookstore. Pick one up. And it will give you the whole explanation.

Yes, the apostolic time, no doubt, the Apostles appointed them and the time right after that, obviously, they were appointed by those who were the key leaders, like Titus and Timothy and so forth. But there's definitely a transition and I try to explain that and how that they should be appointed today. It flows right through that little book. In fact, any and all of you, and I'm not saying that because we gain anything from it, but I want you to get that little book on elders because it will really explain to you the whole biblical pattern.

You know, it's marvelous that you asked this question. All across America, churches are awakening to the fact that there is to be a plurality of godly elders to lead the church. I'm astounded at the influence this has had. I mean, it's every place across America. They ask me this everywhere I go. In fact, in one conference, in one pastors conference that has 2,000 pastors at it, they're death on elders. They believe in one-man rule, one guy runs the whole church, signs the checks, determines the money, does it all. And a guy stood up and said, "What do you think of John MacArthur?" And the leader of the conference said, "Sit down, sir, you're a dangerous man." Because they're so threatened by the thought that somebody else might come into the situation where you have plurality of men. But that's an insulation against one man controlling everything. But some are threatened by that.

But the whole idea of elders in the church is important. So you might enjoy reading that book and it will answer your question.

QUESTION: Hi, John, my name is Lana Johnson. And I have a question in regard to when you listen to a secular talk show and at the end of the show the host makes a statement that evangelical Christians believe this, that it's totally none biblical and the guest, I mean, it was totally off, how much good or discredit does it do to Christianity, to say, send a letter to them because they're coming from

a secular humanist, legalistic viewpoint and they really don't care what Christians think anyway, does it kind of get like some of the moral majority stuff? Or does it really make an impact for Christ?

JOHN: If it's written in love and if it's written with persuasive evidence, it has an impact. Be persuasive. Don't just rant and rave. People who write these rant and rave letters, you know, you don't succeed.

I finished the pastors conference...I'll finish, you can sit down if you want...but I finished the pastors conference Friday in Kansas City and then I went back to the hotel where we were all staying together. And I walked in the lobby and there was a woman waiting there. And she said, "I've been waiting for you." I said..."Oh..." She said, "I've just driven 200 miles to speak to you." And I said, "Well, what did you want to speak to me about?" She said, "I've come to warn you that you're leading people astray with your false teaching."

And so, I said, "Well, perhaps we ought to sit down and you can, you know, tell me how." And so she sat me down and she said...she really, you know, let me have it with this false teaching...you're leading people astray and people believe you because of who you are and here you are teaching things that are contrary to God and contrary to His Scripture...and on and on and on.

And I said, "Do you know what I believe?" She said, "Yes, I know what you believe." She said, "I ordered the tapes on that subject." I said, "Did you listen to them?" She said no. I said, "You didn't listen to them?" She said, "No, I decided not to listen to them. I already know what I believe. Why should I confuse my mind?"

She's not very persuasive with me because she can't even articulate what it is that she believes biblically. And then I said, "Well, let me show you what the Bible says," and I read this verse to her. She says, "I don't care about that, I know what I believe." You think that has an effect on me? No. It doesn't have any effect on me, I just felt sorry for her. I said, "Dear lady, you drove 200 miles all day long to say that? Now it's 11 o'clock at night and you're going to turn around and drive 200 miles home?" She said, "That's right."

I thought...you should have...you know...to myself, I thought, you should have made a better case, it's a long trip. Really. But so many people...you know, they have something in their heart to say but unless you can be persuasive and loving about it, you really alienate someone...the walls all go up, you know.

So, yes I think it helps to do that. And I do that from time to time. And you need to be persuasive. You know, that's the whole idea of preaching is to persuade people. I mean, there are a lot of ways you could look at a preacher. You could look at a preacher a lot of different ways, but the...if you want to know what I'm trying to do to you, I'll tell you...basically...I'm trying to persuade you, that's

what. I hope by the time I'm done with my sermon, you're slammed up against a wall somewhere saying, "I get the message...I get the message...this is what I've got to do." And you're going to go out that door saying yes I will or no I won't.

That's right. If you...if you just go out and say, "Oh, that was nice...I just have the warm and fuzzies, I just...so nice." Now what is the single greatest thing to persuade you with? What's going to be most persuasive to you? Right here, that's why I use it. So, you know, basically, you just want to assault people, in a sense, with the Word of God. Or, you want to comfort them with the Word of God. So, they're going to accept it or reject it, and that's your...you're forcing people to that. It isn't enough to just dump information on them. And so, anything you do in communicating a message needs to be persuasive. Paul persuaded people, didn't he, by putting together that which is reasonable, that which is scriptural, and so forth.

Well, I know you have many other questions about the church and I just want to throw it open. I'm not necessarily fearful of any questions. I mean, the guy, Mendez, who asked about the cross, I mean, it doesn't bother me to answer the best I can about that. And some people get very concerned about speaking a cross on a hill, and I'm not saying that God wouldn't have somebody see that cross and say, "I wonder what that represents, I'd like to find out," and might come to Christ. But for us, it's a matter of priorities, where do you put your investment? What are the priority ministries?

Somebody else might say, "I don't see any point in that at all, I'd rather put the money in literature to give to the people so they can read about the gospel." You know, and you have to come to a priority situation.

And maybe there are some things that you think...you look at my life or you look at Grace Church and you say, "Well, you're into the world. You've got...the seats are too comfortable," or whatever, "We don't need this, or we don't need that," or they're not comfortable about now, are they? But anyway...and that's a fair question and I don't want to second guess a person who asks that question. I mean, Barbara feels in her heart the need to ask that and have that clear and that's great, that's fine. But again, you see, those things that aren't specifically identified in the Bible, it doesn't say you can't have more than this, and you can't have more than this, and you can't have more than this...what it does say is be content with what you have and don't seek everything else. If God in His grace provides it by His abundance and you know you've been faithful with the stewardship of other things, you can receive it at His good and gracious hand.

These are very important things. And we want to be as transparent as we need to be so that the church can always be feeling where we're going together. And it's just great.

Well, our time is more than gone. Why don't we stand and we'll just close with a word of prayer?

O Father, we do thank You for Your many mercies, so many things You've given to us. We have such bounty. And I suppose that all the saints of the ages who have known You have felt the same way, even though comparatively and relatively we have so much more than others and so much more today than other times in history. And, Lord, we thank You for the things we have. Help us to be good stewards of them, of our time, of our talents, our gifts, our energies, our money, our resources, to invest them in eternity. Lord, use them in Your kingdom.

Help us to understand Your Word and Your church and how it ought to illustrate...how it ought to live and how it ought to confront the world. Help us, Lord, to reach this valley and this city and this nation for Christ. Give us...give us a greater witness, a greater boldness. Give us a greater faithfulness, O God, a greater love for Your Word, a greater devotion to you in every way. Help our families be all that they ought to be. Help our kids, O God, to love Jesus Christ with all their heart, soul, mind and strength and to be a better generation than we are that the righteous seed might truly be passed on. And, God, help us in our relationships with each other, to give the most to those relationships, in our families and in our friendships and with those that we're acquainted with, to give the most into those relationships so that there will be spiritual profit and spiritual benefit. And bless all those who serve in this church in whatever capacity and give them fruit that remains for Your glory in Jesus' name. Amen.

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