

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

Questions from the Heart

Selected Scriptures

GTU52

1994

SKIP: Good evening, my name is Skip.

JOHN: Hi, Skip.

SKIP: Hi, John. My question I probably even know the answer. It's been something I've been experiencing which is I've been in a lot of prayer lately about certain things. And when you go through the Scripture, and you read things, for example, like John 14:13, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son." And, for example, John 15:7, "If abideth in Me and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you."

And I know, you know, God is not really a cosmic genie and He's not there to grant every wish which would be kind of absurd. But sometimes I have a hard time because when you really want something, you really pray for it.

JOHN: Sure.

SKIP: And I know you have to pray in His will as the Lord did, you know, "Not My will but Your will be done," how do you blend that sometimes when maybe you think it's a burden He's putting on you to pray and yet you don't see it come and you're still asking in His will but then you look at some of the other verses and it says, oh what's another one, Matthew 21:22, "And all things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing you shall receive." You know, it just gets kind of tenuous sometimes cause you're waiting for an answer even if it's no, but you still have the burden on your heart to pray and you're praying in His will and you want it. And ta-da.

JOHN: Yeah. How many of you have experienced that dilemma? Does that help you?

SKIP: Yeah it does.

JOHN: How many of you know the answer? How many of you know why that happens? To teach us to trust the Lord, that's fair enough. To teach us to trust the Lord, and to teach us that if...how many of you asked your parents for something and didn't get it? I mean, sometime in your life? Yeah, right. How many of you got a lecture about the fact that it wouldn't be good for you to get that? Yes, right. And how many of you know your parents were right? Thank you, both of you. No, sure. I don't know the answer to that, Skip, because I don't know the mind of God. And sometimes I get very frustrated

because I know what the Kingdom needs. See. I mean, I know. You've got to do this, Lord. This is what You have to do. See, we have to have this. And then we can get on with the work. And it's not happening. And so you say, "Why is God putting this heavy burden on my heart? Why does He give me such a confidence that this is really His will and then it doesn't happen?"

Well what you have to realize is that we can't trust our feelings because sometimes we think something is of the Lord when the truth of the matter is, it's really just a strong desire that we have. The ultimate answer to your question is that we really don't know how it is that God can burden us with things that are deeply felt burdens and yet seemingly not fulfill those things. There's really no answer to that other than the sovereignty of God and we have to trust that what happens is His perfect will. And then also, and this is a think I always wind up doing in my own life, is a little spiritual inventory to make sure that I'm not...I'm not in a position to not have my prayer answered because there's something in my own life that isn't as it ought to be. In other words, James says, "You ask and you receive not because you ask amiss that you may consume it on your own lust." In other words, you can be disqualified in your prayer because of the fact that you have a selfish motive. Also, you remember what Peter writes in 1 Peter 3, he says, you know, "Husband and wife better get along well that your prayers be not hindered."

It is possible that if things aren't as they ought to be between you and your wife, you have put a block in God's flow of blessing. Sin of any kind gets in the way. So whenever I pour out my heart to the Lord about something that seems to be heavily laid on my heart, my first response if it doesn't come to pass is a little spiritual inventory and I ask God if there's anything in my life that prevented Him from doing all that He would have done. Secondly, if I pass the test of spiritual inventory, or get my life right with Him, then I just have to say, "Lord, I trust You completely in this, and thank You for the answer You gave and I accept that as Your answer." And sometimes the burden is still there and I just keep praying and asking God to do it, you know, even though it appears it won't happen until the Lord gives me a sense of release from that.

SKIP: Yeah. I just remember one time we were talking about the parable, I can't remember exactly where it is, it's about the person who comes to the house and knocks.

JOHN: Yeah, Luke. It's in Luke.

SKIP: And that's how I feel sometimes.

JOHN: But because of your continual knocking you will get an answer. Yeah, the idea of that parable, you know, the guy's in the middle of the night, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang on the door and the guy finally lets him in and gives him bread just to get rid of him. And what our Lord is saying is if a guy is angry and gives bread to somebody who beats on his door, somebody he's mad at, what do you think a loving God who loves you is going to do when you have a need? Bread is a need. And I don't believe that you will ever come before the Lord in behalf of a need that He will not meet. But it's some of the discretionary things that He has a right to say no to.

SKIP: That's true, and I guess it's sometimes realizing when He says no.

JOHN: Yeah. And, you know, it's fair enough. You know, I remember, or I suppose it's been a few years ago now, somebody said to me one time, "Do you ever ask the Lord for something that's so

specific that He can say no and you'll know He said no?" Cause most of the time we say, "Well, Lord, this is what we'd like, but do Your will," and we go through that whole deal. So whatever He does is so non-descript we don't know whether He said No, Yes, or What.

So I think it's healthy for you to go in there and with importunity and persistence, plead for God to do something and if He says no, you go and you know He said no.

SKIP: So you can really be specific? Like...

JOHN: Right.

SKIP: I want this laid out to me?

JOHN: Lord, Lord, yes...but you, you say, "If this is Your will, Lord," but I want to be specific and if You say no, then I know you have something better than that.

SKIP: I know you can put God in a box or put Him in time frames, but when you have a burden on your heart, can you say specific things, like give me some sort of a yes or no within...you know, I mean do a little flexibility.

JOHN: Yeah, you can say it but He...you can say anything you want but He may say no to that, too.

SKIP: Yeah, I know.

JOHN: He may say, "No, I'm not giving you what you want, I'm not giving it to you in that time frame either." That isn't going to help.

SKIP: I know.

JOHN: You know, I mean a guy who says, "Show me by Tuesday," you know, "Let something fall through my roof, or let me fall away..."

SKIP: Yeah, I was trying to give Him a lot of leeway. It's just hard to be specific because He might say no to that too. That's just been...you know, for two months I've been praying...

JOHN: You know what I believe the Lord wants to hear from you? I believe He doesn't want to hear some kind of theology. I think what the Lord wants to hear is the real deep cry of your heart. He knows what it is you really want to say, whether you say it or not, so you might as well say it. I mean, if you really want it badly and you say, "Lord, I just want Your will," He knows what you want.

SKIP: Oh, I said it badly enough. I walked on top of a mountain for four hours, just to be sure He heard it.

JOHN: He knows what you want and now you've got....you wanted to get as close as possible, right?

SKIP: Right.

JOHN: It's not up there, it's in here, where the Lord abides.

SKIP: I unloaded on Him, too. I told Him exactly what...

JOHN: Well you just keep asking Him and then you learn to trust His answer. I mean, we all do that. We all do that. I mean, that's routine. The wonderful thing about it is we know that He's on our side and we're on His side and we're all in this together in the Kingdom and so it's going to come out the way He wants it to come out. It's exciting.

SKIP: That's true.

JOHN: Okay, good. Tell us your name first.

BRUCE LARANGE: Since God does not contradict Himself and God does not lie, God cannot lie...

JOHN: That's right.

BRUCE: God says, "Thou shalt not lie." How do you defend someone that says to you God also says, "Thou shalt not kill," and yet God sometimes kills?

JOHN: Okay. Now the word in the Hebrew in Exodus 20 which is used for "Thou shalt not kill," is "Thou shalt not murder." And the assumption and the term is that it is an illicit murder, that it is an unjust killing, okay? The question is a difficult question if you push it to its limit because the truth of the matter is, everybody who lives, lives because God gave them life, and everybody who dies, dies because God is in control of who lives and who dies and when they die. So ultimately everybody who dies, dies because God has allowed a death principle.

But the point of Exodus 20 is murder, is a crime. God never kills in an iniquitous way, God never kills as a crime. The only time God takes a life would be as a righteous act, always as a righteous act, a righteous act for His own glory one way or another. It could be that that righteous act was a righteous act on behalf of one of His redeemed saints that He wanted to bring into His own presence, right? It could be that that righteous act was an act of judgment upon evil. But always, when God takes a life, it is a righteous act. And so we start with the character of God and that, you know, basically the Old Testament in total is designed to communicate to us the character of God. God is holy, holy, holy. Therefore, if God takes a life, it is a holy act. God does not murder. God does not indiscriminately and unjustly and iniquitously take life.

The truth of the matter is, looking at it this way, if God killed instantaneously every person on the earth, it would be an act of righteousness, right? Because every person on the earth is...what?...sinner and the wages of sin is death. So it is mercy that any of us are spared and grace.

BRUCE: Thank you.

JOHN: You're welcome. Yeah. Yes.

WENDY: Hi, John, my name is Wendy.

JOHN: Hi, Wendy.

WENDY: I ran into a situation recently, I happened to be getting my haircut and my hairdresser was relating different experiences of his and he began by saying, he was on some trip with some friends and he started having Word of Knowledge from the Lord and he got these visions and stuff. And then he went on to say, "The Lord was giving him a Word of Knowledge that this friend of his who supposedly is a Christian was dealing with demons that were inside of him of lust and homosexuality and different things. And he began talking about how he really feels that if you have a spirit of anxiety or anything, it's not of God so therefore it's of the devil. And he was saying that he feels he needs to deliver all these people of demons. And I told him I don't really agree with him, because I feel that it's a case of sin and being of the flesh and everything and I didn't agree that demons could be inside of a Christian, living inside of a Christian if the Holy Spirit was there.

But I waited till he finished my hair before I said anything.

JOHN: Before you got him too worked, up, right?

WENDY: And I think by the time I left, he thought that he had to deliver me of a spirit or demon of rebellion, or something. I don't know. But is this something that you've come across where....

JOHN: Yes. Yes, this is...there was a guy back in Florida by the name of Don Basham, who propagated this quite extensively in several books and it was picked up by some other people, I think Derrick Prince and a few other people in a very sort of fringe charismatic group got into this. You know, there was...and I wrote about this in one of my books that this guy that was looking for the demon of post-nasal drip and really crazy stuff. Now I don't want to underplay the demonic world and it may well be that demons are involved in all that kind of stuff. But the ridiculous part of it is to assume that this guy can run around telling the demons what to do. You know, I mean, I have tried to cast demons out of people when I was younger and foolish, I'm old and foolish. But I tried to do that and they wouldn't go anywhere. I remember Jerry Mitchell and I, we had a girl here and she had all kinds of demons and they kept talking and yelling and we tried to send those demons everywhere. We sent them to the pit, to Phoenix, to Tucson, Albuquerque. We sent them to the desert. We sent them everywhere. And they didn't go. They didn't go anywhere. I mean, we had absolutely no authority over demons. We're not Apostles, we can't heal the sick and we can't tell the demons what to do.

And the fact of the matter is, we really don't need to do that because the only reason a person would be under that kind of demonic influence would be if they had by virtue of sin in their life given access to that. It's as simple as James, "Resist the devil and he'll...what?...he'll flee." Obedience, it's the whole issue. So to me it's superfluous to go around casting devils out of people. In fact, in the entire New Testament from...in the life of Christ He did that, and, of course, in Matthew 10 He says, "I give you power over disease and power to cast out demons." But apart from the Apostles, that was never done. There's never an indication in the epistles of Paul where he says to people in the church, go around casting demons out. If somebody's sick, cast demons out of them. If somebody's anxious, cast demons out of them. Somebody's nose runs, cast demons out of them. So I believe that all of

our spiritual warfare is bound up in Ephesians 6 where they have the armor of God, you put on the armor of God and you resist the devil and we're wrestling with principalities and powers and so forth. But the answer to that comes in spiritual readiness, in holiness, and virtue and obedience, and all that kind of thing.

But that is a preoccupation of certain sort of far-out charismatics. In fact, more than we'd probably like to admit. And the fallacy of it is one, that everything is the result of a demon. Now you read Galatians 5 and you don't see that. "But the works of the flesh are these," and then it lists all the things that are the works of the flesh. Can he cast out the flesh? Not hardly.

So that's ridiculous to reduce everything to that kind of a simple thing. He, no doubt, is a victim of bad teaching like so many people are and may mean well. But he may get himself into a situation that will be spiritually very dangerous if he thinks he can confront demons on their level and tell them what to do. He may wind up having more problems with him...with them than the people he's trying to help. But it's not an uncommon thing.

WENDY: Everything seems to be an attack. Anything that happens like a trial...

JOHN: Yeah, that's the second point. The second point I want to make is there is a certain sense of irresponsibility built into that view which says, "I'm not really responsible for the problems in my life, demons are. And that is not...that's not where God lays the responsibility. I have no fear of being possessed of a demon. I have no fear of being overrun by demons. I really believe in my heart and you, if you think about it, would believe it too because of the nature of the ministry God's given us, that if the demons could take over my life, they would. Do you believe that?"

WENDY: Yeah.

JOHN: I believe that. I believe if the demons could take my life, they would. I remember when this girl kicked me till my shins bled and this voice kept screaming out of her, "Get him out of her, get him out of her, not him, not him, anybody but him," screaming at me. So I know the demons know whose side I'm on. And if they could take over, they would. I know they would. They'd do the same with anybody who is in position of spiritual leadership. They want to stop the Kingdom.

But I don't have any fear of that. What I fear in my life is not demon evasion, what I fear is that I would be disobedient and sinful. So my objective is not to run around looking for demons that I can send to the pit. My responsibility is to look at my own life and be sure I'm obedient to God. And to always believe that everything that goes wrong is an attack of the devil, in a sense, is irresponsible and it's unwise because you're really not looking where the real issue is. So there's a vulnerability there.

But, you know, this is an illustration, typical illustration of the absolutely disastrous plethora of terrible teaching that exists in the name of Christianity. If there's any one thing that literally drives me right up the proverbial wall, it is the junk that I hear being taught. It's really tragic. And, you know, we see it in our radio ministry, tape ministry, because of the tremendous amount of mail we get from people asking question. And you know, how many of you people have come out of a background of confusion where you didn't understand the Word of God? Right? Well, I mean, a lot of...just out of curiosity, how many of you came out of that kind of that kind of a background where you were taught

wrong the things of God? The devil knows what he's doing. He's not attacking Christianity, he's joining it. I mean, that's the subtlety of it. He disguises himself as an angel of light. So...anyway, I didn't mean to preach at you, you're a nice girl.

WENDY: Thanks. Can I have two points clarified then? Christians can't be possessed by demons.

JOHN: Well I don't know...the word possessed is...let's put it this way, demons could get inside Christians and do a lot of damage because in Acts 5 Peter said to Ananias, "Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" Satan himself filled the heart of Ananias who was a Christian. I don't like to use the word "possessed" because that speaks of ownership and we were bought with a price and we belonged to Christ. But demons don't have to stop outside our ear. They can...somehow they can be very active. We wrestle, that's hand-to-hand combat, with principalities and powers, Ephesians 6:12 says. So I don't know what you mean by possessed. I think demons can get in Christians and mess them up if they give them place...if they give them opportunity for that. But I think the solution to that is not exorcism, the solution to that is obedience, confession of sin.

I've said to people, "Which is worse, to have a demon fouling up your life, or to be disobedient?" And the people will always say, "Oh, to have a demon." I said no, it's the same thing cause the solution is the same. Just confess your sin, turn from it and walk as you ought to walk. So it's a hard question to answer because I don't want to assume that...people say, "Well you can't have the Holy Spirit and a demon in the same place." Well, you could have the Holy Spirit and sin in the same place. Right? So let's not use the word possess, cause that speaks of ownership and we belong to Christ. And that we don't want to forget. But let's say that demons can be very, very hard on Christians if they give place to them by sin.

WENDY: And we can't in today's age, we don't exorcize demons out of people, is that what you're saying?

JOHN: I don't think there are any formulas to do that and that's what exorcism was, using formulas, saying certain words. Secondly, I don't think we can in an apostolic miraculous way command demons out of other people. I don't think we can do that. Jesus could because He literally could cleanse a person of their devils and He passed it on to His Apostles but I don't think it went pass that. The signs of an Apostle were those. The signs of an Apostle were miracles, healings and mighty deeds, 2 Corinthians 11:11. Okay?

WENDY: Thank you very much.

ELISA: My name is Melissa and I'm not sure...well, how do you know if you're a Christian or not?

JOHN: Let me ask you a question. Do you believe Jesus Christ came into the world as God in a human body?

MELISSA: Yeah.

JOHN: Do you believe that He died on the cross for your sins?

MELISSA: Uh-huh.

JOHN: Do you believe that He rose from the dead on the third day?

MELISSA: Uh-huh.

JOHN: Do you believe that in order to go to heaven you have to love Him and have Him as your Savior? Have you asked Him to be your Savior?

MELISSA: Yeah.

JOHN: That's what it means to be a Christian. Now how do you know that? I'll tell you how, because that's what it says in the Bible, right? Who wrote the Bible?

MELISSA: Jesus.

JOHN: Yeah, God did through the Holy Spirit. Can you trust what God said?

ELISA: Yeah.

JOHN: Listen to what He said. He said, "If you believe that Jesus died and rose again, if you believe that God raised him from the dead, and you confess Him as Lord, you shall be saved." Do you believe that?

ELISA: Uh-huh.

JOHN: Then you're a Christian. What's the desire of your heart, honey? Melissa, what is your deepest desire in your heart?

MELISSA: To go to heaven.

JOHN: To go to heaven. Okay, that's the future. What's the deepest desire in your heart for now while He leaves you on the earth? What do you really want most of all in your life?

MELISSA: To have my grandma and Grandpa be a Christian.

JOHN: To have Grandma and Grandpa be a Christian. Who do you think put that desire there, the devil?

MELISSA: No.

JOHN: Who put it there?

MELISSA: God.

JOHN: Who's in there putting those kind of desires there?

MELISSA: God.

JOHN: Yeah, so who's in your life?

MELISSA: Jesus.

JOHN: So what are you?

MELISSA: A Christian.

JOHN: You got it. That's what I thought. (Applause) So, you see, you know...you know you're a Christian by what you believe and you know you're a Christian by what you desire most of all in your heart. Do you understand?

MELISSA: Uh-huh.

JOHN: Do you like to come to church?

MELISSA: Uh-huh.

JOHN: Do you like to hear people teach the Bible?

MELISSA: Uh-huh

JOHN: Do you like to sing Christian songs?

MELISSA: Uh-huh.

JOHN: Do you like to serve God?

MELISSA: Yeah.

JOHN: It sounds good. Thanks. God bless you. Okay.

MAX: My name is Max.

JOHN: Hi, Max.

MAX: Hello. I'm a Hebrew Christian, right? And my Dad doesn't want me to come to church or anything, okay. And I had to write it down cause I didn't know what to say, hold on a second.

JOHN: That's all right.

MAX: I promised him that I wouldn't go while living at that...you know, I'm living at our house cause I'm going to try to move out. But first I have to find a roommate. Okay. And I promised him that I wouldn't go and this guy over there practically dragged me in so, it's nothing...

JOHN: He'll do that if you let him.

MAX: The promise is, I think I've broken a promise, right? And isn't that something wrong? I mean, when I go home tonight he's going to ask me, "Did you attend the services?" Because I said for right now...

JOHN: Let me give you a perspective on that, okay?

MAX: Yeah.

JOHN: I think sometimes we make foolish promises. I think...

MAX: I know, I know.

JOHN: Yeah. I think sometimes we make promises to men that we shouldn't make because we have a higher vow to God. And I will just remind you of Matthew chapter 10 where it says in verse 35, "I am come to set a man at variance against his father."

MAX: Yeah, I know that one.

JOHN: "And the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law and a man's foe shall be they of his own household. He that loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me and he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross," that means a willingness to die, "and follow after Me is not worthy of Me but that he that finds his life shall lose it, and he that loses his life for My sake shall find it."

I think if I were in your situation, what you need to do is go to your father, tell him that you want to be a son of honesty and integrity, you want to keep your word, but you have a higher calling from God, you must be faithful to what Christ has done in your life. You don't want to be unfaithful to your word, but you feel that God has laid it on your heart that you must be faithful and obedient to Him. Share with him, even if you want, that Scripture but I think you must obey the Lord, but you must be gracious, loving, and anxious to show your father that you want to maintain your integrity and that the promise you made, you didn't understand at the time, was a violation of the things you believe and you've got to stand for what you believe.

MAX: Well I kind of did that. But the problem is, is that I said that, "All right, you don't want me to go to church at all while I'm living here, so I'll just...just give me about a month or so, so I can find some place to move out, right?"

JOHN: Yeah.

MAX: And I don't want to make some sort of big scene. Wouldn't that be...lack of integrity?

JOHN: I wouldn't worry about it, I think you're compelled by something inside of you and that's the working of the Spirit of God to be with the people of God and the Word of God. I think it's a very normal thing for you to want to be here. I wouldn't worry about it. I'd just say, "Hey, forgive me for that but I have a compelling that the Lord has put in my heart." Try to maintain the relationship as good as you can, and if you need to move out, move out. Okay?

QUESTIONER: My question...I understand what you're saying how we need to back our government, even though it's not the best government, even though it's not a Christian government. There is no Christian government, only Christian people. And I also understand when you say that we shouldn't be into fulltime political, even Christian political activism, even though there are some people who are employed, Christians employed fulltime in politics. But now my question is, what about people who are interested in some of the political things that are happening, say the Gay Rights Bill, or right now there's a Bill open for public comment on rights for newborn children who have some physical deformity and they're allowing them to die and it's...and so that's open for public comment. And I'm wondering, what is our responsibility to the government to let our legislatures...legislators know how we feel?

JOHN: I think...and I think I may have said this, maybe not clearly enough, but see, I believe we need to take every means available to us as citizens to effect change in our country legally. And every time you have an opportunity to do that, you need to do that. If I am...if there's a forum where I can say what needs to be said, then I want to say that. If there's a letter that I can write, then I need to write that letter. If there's a vote that I can make, then I need to make that vote. So...and if the Lord called me to be involved in government, or in civil services, a policeman, or as a country prosecutor or district attorney, or I don't know what, you know, working even as a legislator or something, I don't see anything wrong with that. The thing that concerns me is the illusion that Christians banding together using political means can bring the Kingdom, or expedite the Kingdom. I think what we have to do...and what happens is, when Christians, they start out with good intentions to be involved in moral issues, and I'm not against that, I think Christians ought to stand up against abortion and gay rights and the ERA and a lot of other things. I really believe that we ought to take our stand in those issues.

But somehow, what happens is in the midst of wanting to take the right and legal means to take a stand and preach and proclaim against sin, we get diverted into the illusion that we can change our country by effecting changes in the political system. And I think that...I mean, we want to vote, we want to vote together on some things. We ought to know, for example, who are the legislators in the state of California who are pro-abortion and we ought to let them know where we stand. It's a fine line.

I know in my own case, if I feel like I need to write a letter to a senator, I write a letter. If I feel like I don't care to do that, I don't do that. But I want to use every legal means, every means within my power. I want to teach and preach here so that it's very clear what we believe and we make a statement and we teach our people what their stand should be in the world. But what bothers me is when I know many pastors who have literally abandoned the church, and abandoned the pulpit and abandoned studying the Scripture, abandoned teaching the Bible to run around and get themselves

associated with the Mormons and the Moonies and all these co-belligerence to gain certain religious freedom. You know, to me it's a paraphrase, like Sam Ericsson does, what shall it profit a man the church if we gain our freedom and lose our message? I mean, what's the point. So we just have to be sure we're clear on what our message is.

And what I'm saying, too, is that because my government isn't all it ought to be, it doesn't mean I can shoot people in my government, or I can be an unruly citizen, disobey the law, not pay my taxes, so forth and so on. Does that help?

QUESTIONER: Yeah, it does, thanks.

JOHN: Okay, good.

LAURA: Hello, my name is Laura. And my question is, there's a lot of false religions, Mormonism, for example, where they...archaeologists haven't found any evidence that this great civilization that was supposed to be here on this continent. I was just wondering as far as Christianity is concerned, I know that there's a lot of historical evidence as far as Jesus' existence. I was just reading in Acts yesterday about the account of Herod, when he died...

JOHN: Acts 12, he was eaten by worms.

LAURA: Yes, eaten by worms for five days and I know that Josephus recorded this event. I was just wondering, were there other historians at that time for events like this or other events that...you know, give us empirical evidence or scientific evidence, or something for witnessing sake and also for faith-building sake.

JOHN: Sure. Boy, that's good. You need to come out to the Master's College the next two weeks and take the course on Christian apologetics. That's wonderful. Or go to the bookstore and buy a book called, Evidence That Demands A Verdict. Is that how...is that the title of it? Yeah, written by one of my classmates in seminary, Josh McDowell. Evidence That Demands A Verdict, very helpful along that line.

Let me...let me just respond to you in a simple, simple way. All right? One of the best exercises I had in seminary was Dr. Bass before he died was a fine apologist and he had us memorize a sort of self-contained small paragraph on every major issue of Christianity with a logical kind of defense. And that's very important in witnessing, when people ask questions. But look at it from several viewpoints, okay? The best means of defending Scripture, I'll give you just a little handful of it. Number one, these are the five best means of defending the veracity of Scripture. In my judgment they go from the least effective to the most effective.

Okay, the least effective, but a good one, is experience. One of the things that's very convincing to people about the truth of the Bible is its impact on your life. In fact, I would venture to say that most people who come to believe the gospel are initially drawn to that belief not because they've been intellectually convinced, but because they've seen somebody's changed life. Is that not so? And that's the initial attraction. How do you get to be so happy? Where did you find peace? How did you get an answer to your needs, and so forth?

So experience is a valid one. In other words, you say the Bible can change your life. You say the

Bible can bring the knowledge of Christ, and you can experience the forgiveness of sin, the hope of heaven, joy, and purpose, da-da-ta-da, and you did it and it happened in your life. That's evidence, okay? But it's not the strongest evidence because Mormons have experiences. Jehovah's Witnesses have experiences. Hindus have experiences. Some people think they see pink elephants and they don't. So you don't want to build truth on human experience, but it still has a very strong emotional appeal.

The second in the five would be science. The Bible is remarkably accurate when it comes to science. For example, you read eastern literature and you'll find that the earth sits in a pile of honey. You can find even in Pliny that Greek...all kinds of bizarre descriptions of the earth we know aren't remotely related to the truth...flat earth on the backs of certain things, sitting on pillars and all of that. So from a scientific viewpoint, the Bible is amazing. The oldest book in the Bible, Job, says, "He turns the earth like the clay to the seal." And what that means is you had a piece of clay with your signature on it, you took soft clay and a little stick through it and just rolled that across the soft clay and it imprinted your signature. And that, when it says, "He turned the earth like the clay to the seal," means the earth rotates on an axis. It also uses the Hebrew word *klug(?)* which means sphere and when people were saying the world was flat, the Bible was saying it was a sphere.

The whole issue of the water cycle is in the Scripture. How He draws up the seas and carries them with the clouds over the land, and sends it back down again. It talks about the earth being in perfect balance, the depth of the sea and the water weight, the height of the mountain and the mountain weight keeps the earth from going like a bent ball, or, you know, completely out of kilter and throwing everybody off after each cycle.

So there are a lot of things like that. One of the ones that's most dynamic is the fact that in 1903 Herbert Spencer died and he was...he received a great prize for discovering classification. In other words, all the knowable, Herbert Spencer said, could be classified into five categories, which is pretty marvelous to reduce it down to five. He said everything that exists is either time, force, action, space or matter...time, force, action, space, or matter. And in 1903 he died and he died hailed as one of the great scientists because of that discovery. What he didn't know was, Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning," that's time, "God," that's force, "created," that's action, "the heavens," that's space, "and the earth," that's matter.

Now you can go from Genesis 1:1 right on through the Scripture and find some pretty remarkable things. The third and very powerful impactful evidence of Scripture's veracity is the person of Christ. You study the person of Christ and come up with any other conclusion than that He was God, and you have testimony after testimony, after testimony, eye witness after eye witness. The man's life could never be denied. It's there for the world to see. It is verified not only in the biblical record but in extra-biblical record as well, such as Tacitus, Josephus, and so forth. How can you argue with a perfect life?

The fourth would be the matter of miracles...the matter of miracles. By the way, in the science category you put archaeology, the discovery of archaeological data that verifies biblical history. And then you take the miracles. How do you explain the miracles of Scripture? How do you explain 500 people seeing a resurrection?

And then the final and most impactful of all apologetic categories is prophecy. The Bible says something is going happen and it happens to the very letter. Predominantly that's Old Testament

prophecy being fulfilled within the biblical record. And so those are the things you want to look at and as I say, you can get a lot of good recourses for that because there are just myriads of things that can help you prove that. The best thing, I think, is Evidence That Demands A Verdict. Okay?

LAURA: Thanks, I needed that.

JOHN: You're welcome, you're welcome.

QUESTIONER: Hi, I have a question regarding Acts chapter 2. Now is this just a historical account or did God lay this pattern out how the church should function? Cause I noticed, you mentioned the complacency, you know, how we need to be held accountable and people don't like that. It's pretty comfortable being in our own little capsules.

JOHN: Now which part...which part of Acts 2 are you...

QUESTIONER: Forty-two, excuse me, day after day.

JOHN: Sure, Acts 2:42. Let's look at Acts 2:42...

QUESTIONER: Or 46, excuse me.

JOHN: Forty-two to forty-six. Okay, well let's just go through the whole thing. We'll look at all of it. Peter gets up on the Day of Pentecost and preaches a great sermon. The primary focus of the sermon is to tell the people of Jerusalem that they have killed their Messiah. And that didn't settle well with them. It wasn't that they got angry, it's that they became very convicted. Verse 36 sort of sums it up. He says that God has made the same Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ. "When they heard it, they were pricked to the heart. They said to Peter and the rest of the Apostles, "Men and brethren, what do we do?" In other words, there's a certain admission of guilt here, what are we going to do? And then Peter says to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ with regard to the remission of sins and you'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." In other words, he calls for salvation, the symbol of salvation, the baptism outwardly and then the gift that comes along, the gift of the Holy Spirit will belong to them, so forth and so on.

His message comes to a conclusion. In verse 41 it says, "They that gladly received His word were baptized the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls." So the church is born with three thousand people, okay? This is the first church.

Verse 42 then tells us the four elements of church life in which they engaged. But the first key idea is they continued steadfastly. Continuity in the faith is always the mark of true salvation. John 8 says, "If you continue in My Word," verse 31 to 34, "if you continue in My word, then you're My real disciple." So they continued. There was continuity, three thousand saved, three thousand continued, that's the kind of evangelism that everyone would want to do. There's no loss.

Fourth things they engaged in. One, the Apostles' doctrine, that means simply the revelation of God, the teaching of the New Covenant. Obviously they didn't ignore the Old Testament but the focus of their life as a church was on the doctrine taught and articulated by the Apostles, the New Covenant.

People ask me all the time why I spend so much time in the New Testament, and why I seem only...or mostly to use the Old Testament as an illustration source, and that is because I believe from the very beginning of the New...of the church, the Apostles' Doctrine and the New Covenant teaching was the matter with which they were mostly preoccupied. So they studied the Apostles' Doctrine, that is the revelation and the teaching of God coming through the Apostles because it had not yet been written down.

Secondly, they engaged in *koinonia*, that's the partnership of life. Now what do we mean by that partnership? *Koinonia* means partnership. I think the very best way to understand that is an intimate sharing on a spiritual level in life. If you want to know what that partnership is, it's a partnership of love, it probably could be summed up best by the "one anothers" of the New Testament; pray for one another, edify one another, love one another, build one another up, comfort one another, whatever. And they were engaged in mutual ministry.

Thirdly, breaking of bread, most likely has to do with the Lord's Table. It may also have to do with food, with eating together in a meal, but it certainly has the tone of the Lord's Table as well, and then in prayer. So there was teaching, there was fellowship, there was eating together, including the Lord's Table, and there was prayer. Now I believe to this day that it is still a viable model for the life of the church.

Furthermore, it says a sense of awe came on every soul. This was an awesome group of people. Any group of people who are so totally preoccupied with divine truth, with loving intimate Spirit-filled fellowship with the sharing of life and a gathering around the focal point of our faith, the cross of Christ, and diligently committed to prayer are going to have a dynamic impact, and they did. Many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles. Note it was the Apostles who did them, not the people, for these were the signs and wonders that came as gifts to the Apostles, according to 1 Corinthians, very clear on that, chapter 12.

Now it says in verse 44, "And all that believed were together." And that's a general statement together in heart and soul and mind and spirit, "and had all things common." What that means is that if I had something you needed, I gave it to you. There's a certain sense in which we hold in trust everything together within the community of faith. It doesn't mean Communism. It doesn't mean that everybody took what they had, liquidated it and somebody sat in the seat and doled out equal shares to everyone. And we can prove that by verse 45. The imperfect verb form is used, "And they were selling their possessions and goods, and they were parting them to all men as every man had need."

When you read in the Authorized, "And they sold, and they parted," it kind of sounds like at one point in time they sold everything and split it all up in kind of a Christian communism form. But the Greek verb says they were selling, it's a continual thing and they were parting as people had need. So here in this community of people, if I have something and a resource that is abundance to me and you have a need, my resource of abundance becomes the meeting of your need.

Verse 46, "They continuing daily with one accord in the temple." Why? Well the temple was the only place of worship there that didn't have a building, and that's where everybody worshiped and this wasn't something different, this was the consummation of the Old Covenant. This was that of which every temple sacrifice spoke and so the place to go to worship God was the temple and they went there every day. It was not uncommon for the Jew to go there every day anyway, some devout Jews. They went there every day and then they were sharing meals and that again, I think, implies the

Lord's table though it's not explicitly stated, from house to house in each other's homes and they ate their food together with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. The result was, the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Now that's a general overview. Having said that, is there a specific thing that you want me to hit?

QUESTIONER: Yeah. The church doesn't seem to meet very often, like...

JOHN: The present church.

QUESTIONER: The church in America, cause I noticed that the church in America has a certain thrust. The church in Korea meets more often and they pray and God's dynamics is just incredible difference.

JOHN: Sure. Well let me see if I can answer that for you. The church in my judgment, you have to identify what you mean by the church. I don't think that when they were breaking house to house, the whole three thousand came to everybody's house every day.

QUESTIONER: No, okay.

JOHN: I think what was happening was believers were congregating as a manner of the daily course of life and it could have been here or there or everywhere. Life was very communal. There were no freeways. There were no highways. I mean, you lived in the city...if you were to go to the city of Jerusalem today, which would be a wonderful thing for you to do, you could...in the old city where the wall is, you could walk anywhere in the city and, you know, be with anybody you wanted within a matter of a few minutes. So life was a bit different.

But this, of course, is behind...really behind the home Bible studies that we have. And the cultivating of flocks and fellowship groups and all the things that we do to stimulate that continual intercourse of spiritual intimacy that ought to be going on all the time among Christians. My...as long as you're asking, I'll jump on the soapbox for a minute, but one of my pet peeves and concerns is the fact that people treat particularly Sunday worship as if it were an option. I mean, it grieves my heart that there are people who will come here two out of four Sundays and think they've done God a favor. I mean, and it isn't a question of whether the sermon is interesting. I mean, let's face it, folks, I might be interesting now and then, but I'm not going to be...I'm not going to be exhilarating every time I open my mouth. But the commitment of people today is the commitment that says, "Hey, you got something that interests me, I'll be there." It's not the thing that says, "How can I go and offer my praise to God? And how can I go and expose my life to His Word so that I could be a better person? And how can I go so that someone could minister to me and I can minister to them? And how can I go not to take but to give God the honor due His name if the sermon was a two on a one-to-ten scale?" See?

But we don't have that mentality. We have that deal that says, "Hey, what have you done for me lately?" And, you know, when you've in the same place like I have for 17 years, it's old hat. "Him again?" I'm like the poor, you always have me with you. And, you know, so...and I'm grieved by that. You know, we live in a society with so many options, I can remember as a little boy the hottest thing going in town was a Sunday-night church service. I mean, it was great. It was either that or sit home

and listen to crackling radio. And it was exciting and the place was packed. It's a different age and I think your question is well put. We...I mean, we need to spend our life with people of like-precious faith. We don't ignore the world, but we need that intimate fellowship.

Well I'm preaching now, so...thank you.

QUESTIONER: All right, thank you.

MARY: Hi, John, my name is Mary. My question is, in Acts 2:4 it talks about...and 1 Corinthians 12, it talks about the tongue as a spiritual gift. My question is, how is the tongue supposed to be used today and how can we misuse it?

JOHN: Chris, can you clarify what she...did she say how can tongue.

CHRIS: She wants to know about the gift of tongues? And how is it to be used and is it being misused? That's the question.

JOHN: Yeah, okay, good. That's what I thought she said. Well let me say this. It's very clear in Acts 2 that God gave to the Apostles the ability to speak in languages they did not know. Okay? And as a result, it says people were hearing in all different kinds of languages the wonderful works of God.

Now I believe that the purpose of that gift was to establish the fact that a supernatural presence, a supernatural message was to be proclaimed. It called the attention of everyone who was hearing this. Some of the people concluded that they were drunk because it was early in the morning. But it collected the people around the phenomena of that wondrous ability to speak in those languages that they didn't know. That was a Holy Spirit miracle. And then when the crowd was all gathered, Peter stood up and preached in a language that everybody understood or in his own native tongue, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and three thousand people were saved and the church was born.

I see in that then that the tongues were a sign...a sign of the miraculous power of God, a sign of supernatural presence which drew the people together and made the message that was preached more powerful, more acceptable, more authentic in their eyes. So in that occasion we see it clearly as a sign that God was speaking and that what...and when God got their attention, then came the message of the gospel.

Now when you come to...and by the way, if you follow that through, I believe tongues probably occurred in Acts 8, even though it doesn't say that, but where you have the church moving out into Samaria. And then in chapter 10, definitely occurred when the church moves to the Gentiles. And then later on in 19 when John the Baptist's disciples were brought into the church, you have it again. And I believe in the book of Acts, the reason you have the tongues repeated again is because every time the next dimension of people were added to the church, it was important that they have the same phenomena so that they would know they were being added to the same body. So that the sign given on the Day of Pentecost was repeated at each new phase of the church. You remember that the gospel was to go forth and they were to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the world. And when the gospel came to the Samaritans, there was the same phenomena. When it came to the Gentiles, there was the same phenomena. When those who followed John the Baptist were brought in, they saw the same phenomena. Peter came back and reported, you remember, to the

council that on the Gentiles came the same thing that came on us. So as the Lord built the church, they had this same sign, the same supernatural sign so the Jews would not think they received something special that Samaritans and Gentiles didn't get.

So it was a sign gift. Now you come into 1 Corinthians 12 to 14, it is still a sign gift but it was being perverted in the Corinthian church. And I believe it was being mixed and mingled with a lot of ecstatic speech that was a part of the pagan religion of that day. It was still, if it was used properly, to be a sign gift. Paul then in 1 Corinthians 12 to 14 regulates it. He says how it is to function. He first of all introduces it as a gift in chapter 12. He tells at the end of chapter 12 that it's an unimportant gift. In chapter 13 he says, "Love is much more important." In chapter 14, "Edification is much more important." He says women are never to exercise it, it's never to be more than two or three people. It's never to be without interpretation. But it doesn't change the nature of it. It was a sign gift, a sign of the presence of God and a sign that God was about to speak so that when the speaker spoke they would know it was from God.

In that sense, it's a sign that we don't need any more because when a speaker speaks today, we now whether he's from God or not by how he is consistent with...what?...Scripture. I don't need signs and wonders to attest to a prophet. If he sticks with the book, I know he speaks for God. But in that day, when there was no New Testament to compare him with, God gave, as it says in 2 Corinthians, the gifts of an Apostle in signs and wonders and mighty deeds, chapter 12 verse 12.

So tongues was a sign gift. And I'm giving you a condensed version...again you can get the book on tongues. I hate to keep saying that, but it's there available, if you want one, pick one up on me. But the gift of tongues was a sign gift.

Now I believe it has ceased. I believe it has passed away. First Corinthians 13, "Whether there be tongues, they shall," and it uses a reflexive form of the verb, "they shall cease by themselves." And I believe when the end of the apostolic era came, tongues ceased. And I believe that you can chronicle through the history of the church the cessation of tongues. They didn't exist except in aberrant forms. And then it was revived in the early part of the 1900's and brought back in as if it were some legitimate gift. It's my conviction that it has no place in the church today, no place. It was part of the signs of an Apostle, such as healing, and the gift of miracles which I see as *dunamis* or the gift of power, that is to cast out demons on the spot, at will.

So I think it's one of those temporary gifts that passed away, was used to signify the spokesmen for God who were speaking so that the people would know they spoke for God which we now know by whether they stick with the Word.

Now you say, "Well what is it that people are doing today?" Well I think the people who are speaking in what they call tongues can be explained in many ways. One, I think much of it is learned behavior...just learned behavior. They learn how to do it. They're in a group that does it. In fact, I've heard it in many places around the country and I've listened to it on tape, when I was working on the book I got involved in studying some of the reports of it, and it's very interesting that much of it is the same language and the same repeated symbols. It is a non-language, but it is very often learned behavior.

It can also be explained as sort of a mental paroxysms where you sort of flip out into some kind of a

self-hypnotic situation, some of it can be demonic. So there are other explanations. But I see that it has ceased from a biblical viewpoint and has no function in the church today. Okay?

Thanks for asking.

KEN: Hi, John, my name is Ken. I got a question from Acts 2:38, "Peter says, 'To repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.'" It seems like Peter is indicating you've got to be baptized to be saved, yet the Bible teaches we're saved by faith through grace. So I was wondering what did Peter mean by being baptized and why did he say it?

JOHN: Well first of all, you want to take Acts 2:38 in the context of the whole of Scripture. And it's very obvious and very clear that the whole of Scripture teaches that we're saved by grace through faith. If you read Ephesians 2:8 and 9, it says just that, "For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast."

You also have in Acts chapter 8 the illustration of Simon, you remember, who wanted the Holy Spirit? He was baptized and then Peter said to him, in effect, "You are an unbeliever, you're in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity and I just..." obviously baptism didn't save him. Obviously the lack of baptism didn't damn the thief on the cross because Jesus said to him, "This day you'll be with Me in paradise," even though that, of course, was a pre-church situation.

So the whole of Scripture teaches salvation by grace through faith. But at the same time, the first and initial act of obedience in the early church, the first and initial act of obedience was a public confession of that faith. And I believe that public confession of faith came forth in baptism so that baptism is linked with repentance. "Repent and be baptized," is to say repent of your sin and make public confession. It may be very much like Romans 10:9 and 10 if you believe in your heart God raised him from the dead and confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, you'll be saved. So I believe that baptism was God-ordained as a first step of public confession of a repentant, believing heart.

It was so inseparably linked to salvation as to be spoken of, if you will, in the same breath. I believe, for example, in Ephesians 4 when it says "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," it's talking about water baptism because that water baptism was such an immediate visible expression of a heart of faith that they were tied together.

So repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, simply takes the confession and the faith and puts it together. One is the heart and the other is the outward acknowledging and I think it puts them together.

Some would take the word "for," the preposition "for," and translate it "because." I've gone through that myself. That's a possibility, but in other words, it would read, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ because of the remission of sins." Adding that baptism is there because your sins have been remitted. But I don't really think you need to force it to say that. It's simply that baptism was so inextricably linked to the inward attitude of the heart as the way that the confession was made that they're tied together. And you see it in verse 41, "They that gladly received His Word were...what?...were baptized."

Now you don't want to come up with a baptismal salvation because that would strike a blow at the

doctrine of salvation by grace through faith which is pervasive in Scripture. So you want to see baptism for what it is, the outward confession of the inward belief, okay? Thank you.

JOHN DURST: Hi, John, my name is John Durst, and my question is...obviously we all believe that Jesus must be Lord for us to be saved, to have salvation. How does that fit in cause we hear so often about carnal Christians, what is a carnal Christian? How can...if Jesus is Lord, then how come you're living a fleshly life?

JOHN: You ask these big issues, these big questions. Well, let's start with one point, okay? Let me ask you a question? Is Jesus Lord?

JOHN DURST: Yes.

JOHN: Yeah, okay, we don't need to debate that, right?

JOHN DURST: Right.

JOHN: People say all the time, "Well, you know, I made Jesus Lord." And I just go, "Wait a minute, you didn't make Him anything. You didn't create Christ. He's Lord," period. Let me ask you a second question. Can you obey Him?

JOHN DURST: Yes.

JOHN: Can you disobey Him?

JOHN DURST: Yeah.

JOHN: Does that change whether He's in charge?

JOHN DURST: No.

JOHN: No. So the lordship of Christ is a clear-cut thing in Scripture....very clear. And I believe there's no way to divest Christ of His Lordship. Now I know there's a big debate about whether *kurios* means deity and deity alone, or whether it implies authority. I don't think there's any question that it implies authority.

I was having lunch with a professor one day and he said, "Well I believe that all that *kurios*," that's the Greek word for Lord, "all it means is deity." I said okay. I don't agree with that because otherwise Thomas wouldn't have said, "My Lord and my God." That's redundant if they both mean deity. The Lord must have meant something to enhance the thought of God, deity.

So I said, "Let's assume, however, that Lord only means deity." Then I said, "What does that mean? Are you telling me that doesn't mean He's in charge? Are you telling me He is God, He's just not in charge?" So you don't gain a thing by that. The Bible is clear that Jesus is Lord and if Lord means God, then God means He's in charge. So I believe that when you come to Jesus Christ, He's in charge of your life. Where this carnal Christian thing came in, I think where it was...before it became

popularized was through a little book that Campus Crusade put out a number of years ago, we used to call The Bluebird Book. It had three little circles. In circle number one, you had an unbeliever. Self was on there, there was a little circle and there was a throne on the middle and self was on the throne and chaos in the life. That's an unbeliever. Then you had another circle which was called the carnal Christian. You had a throne and self was on the throne and the Lord was in the circle but He was over in the corner. And that was the carnal Christian. In other words, he believed but he was still in charge of his own life.

The third circle was the spiritual Christian. The little throne had the Lord on it and self was in the corner and everything in the life was orderly. And what that conveyed was that when you become a Christian, you can go into any of those two circles, right? You can be a self-controlled Christian or a Lord-controlled Christian. And that's what...that's what I react against. I don't believe there's any such thing as a Christian with self on the throne. I think there are only Christians with the Lord on the throne, some are obedient and some are disobedient. Okay?

What is a carnal Christian? Well if you mean a fleshly one, that's a disobedient believer. But that has nothing to do with whether the Lord is on the throne or not. He is the ruler of your life. He is the master of your life. It's only a question of whether you're obeying Him. Okay?

Does that sort of simplify it a little?

JOHN DURST: A little bit.

JOHN: Now let me tell you one other thing? I believe that when a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ, they don't have the option to accept Him just as Savior and keep self on the throne. See, that's the argument with the carnal Christian idea is that you can be saved and not necessarily have a changed life cause you're still running your life. In other words, it's as if salvation is only forensic. In other words, it's just God writing your name on the list and saying, "Well he's saved," nothing changes.

JOHN DURST: Cause along that lines, I heard a teaching that we can't lose our salvation but we could lose our sanctification. How...does that relate at all?

JOHN: Well lose is probably not the right word. You can't lose your salvation, but you can...

JOHN DURST: You can't lose your salvation, but I heard them saying you can lose your sanctification, your holiness, your set-apartness. Would that be being disobedient?

JOHN: Well you can be disobedient, yeah. Just keep it simple. When you're saved, it's a total transformation, Christ is on the throne of your life, and you're either obedient or disobedient. If you're disobedient, you're not holy. If you're obedient, you are. Okay?

JOHN DURST: Thank you.

JOHN: Yes, one more question.

MARY: Hi, John, I'm Mary. Could you please tell me how we can each know what God's special plan is in our lives in terms of how we can use our talents or, you know, how we know when we are using them in the right direction?

JOHN: Sure. Well, you know, Mary, I think it's simple to answer that by saying "walk in the Spirit and He'll lead you where you need to be." I never plan too far ahead. I just think we need to live in the present tense and the only thing I know about even my own ministry is that I want to do today what God lays upon my heart to do. And I kind of lean on a verse, and you know it, I'm sure, very well, "Delight in the Lord and He'll give you the desire of your heart." And I really do believe that part of spiritual life...I don't want to oversimplify the situation, but a great part of our spiritual life can be reduced to that principle of Psalm 37:4, it's down to the fact that if I delight in the Lord, then He's going to fill my heart with desire and He's going to fulfill those desires.

When it comes to "how do you know your gift?" Don't go to a computer and try to figure out your gift. Don't go to analysis. When you're walking in the Spirit, what do you like to do? And when you walk in the Spirit, and you do what you like to do, what kind of response do you get? If I said, "I'm in the Spirit and I want to preach. Boy, I just want to...I just want to teach God's Word and study God's Word." That would be the way God expressed that through me.

Now on the other hand, I want to be sure that everybody agrees. I could say, "Boy, I'm gifted to teach, I'm gifted to preach," and everybody out there is saying, "Mercy, mercy, shut him up, get him out." So, you know, you want to have a confirmation on that. But I really believe that if you walk in the Spirit, and you let the Spirit control your life, that the gifts that He's given you in the ministry that He's placed before you will flow and it will happen. Expose yourself as to as much opportunity as you can and see where the Spirit of God directs your willing heart.

MARY: That's a great answer. Thank you very much.

JOHN: Thank you, Mary. Thank you.

Well, that takes us to a good point to kind of wrap our thoughts up tonight. Boy, these have been good questions, I hope they've been helpful to you. You know, what excites me is I've been doing this for a lot of years, and I always know, I don't always know the best answer to the question, but I always know there's an answer. Isn't that wonderful? And you say, "Well how can a person be so well read? I mean, the L.A. Library has got two million, five hundred thousand books, how can you know everything?" Look, isn't it wonderful? I mean, it's all in this little book.

You say, "You mean that book deals with everything?" Listen, that book deals with every area of human life that is necessary to be considered. It will deal with anything you can think of in terms of principle, if not in terms of actual objective data or fact. And that's...I guess that's what appeals to me. I've always been a sort of a one-track person and the thrill of ministry for me is it's all reduced to this one book and it's so simple to pour your life into one book and to know that whenever there's a question in your heart, that book contains the right answer.

Are we rich or are we rich who possess this book? And the ultimate crime of all crimes is to have it and not know what it says. Amen? Try that again. Amen! To have it and not know what it says. Spend your life here. I'm no smarter than anybody here. I'm not going to give you my GPA when I

was in college, but it wouldn't shake anybody loose. I was...I was not a great student. But somewhere along the line in my life, I...the Lord did something to change my heart. I basically went through college never letting my books get in the way of my education. I was...I went from one game to the next, football, basketball, baseball. I was involved in student activities, I was involved in so many things, and it wasn't study that had a priority with me. Until I got to seminary and got a small taste of the Word of God, and then I got this almost consuming appetite for the Scripture and there were many people in seminary who...who were so much more able to study and learn than I was. I had to slug it out, but I think over the years because my own particular mind demands such repetition in order to retain, that constantly pounding the same things into my own head has resulted in some of them sticking in there, and I just praise God for that. I feel like the richest man in the world because more than anything else, because God has allowed me the privilege by the grace of His Spirit to commit to my heart the truth of His Word.

And I just tell you, that's the joy of life. You know, when you become a Christian, that seems like the greatest thing that could ever happen, and really it is. But there's another time in your life when you wake up and realize that you have a grip on the Word of God that will be almost as exciting to you.

To put it in the words of the Holy Spirit through Paul, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you...what?...richly." Well, let's pray.

Our gracious Father, we thank You so much for what You've given us in Your Word. We thank You for who You've given us in Your Spirit, so that we have an objective revelation and a subjective teacher, so that we have the Word in our hands and the Spirit in our souls. Truly we need not that any man should teach us with human wisdom who are taught of God by the Word and the Spirit. May it dwell in us richly. Then I pray, Lord, tonight that all the unanswered questions might be answered, all the longings of the hearts of those who are still asking might be put to rest. Lord, I pray that each of us though in the great measure dependent on each other will find a sense of independence in our own study of Your Word because of the availability of the Spirit. Help us be diligent enough to study and read, patient enough to let the answers come as we faithfully digest Your truth and to help us ever and always even as Mark Twain once said to be more concerned to put into practice what we do know than to worry about what we don't know. Help us not to struggle on the fringe of speculation while being disobedient to those things that are patently obvious.

Lord, help us to take what we do know and live it and protect us from the evil one and the doctrines of demons that come under the energy of seducing spirits through hypocritical liars who would deceive us and make us faithful to Your Word, to Your people, to Your gospel. And may we ever and always balance the intake with prayer. Forgive us for our prayerlessness, forgive us for our cold prayers. Forgive us for our heartlessness and not praying. Forgive us for those lightweight prayers that are nothing more than duty. And make us the people You want us to be, in the name of Christ we pray. Amen.

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