

Ask Jeff 4.26.17

Student Edition

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Alright, ladies and gentlemen, we're going to go ahead and get started tonight. As you can tell, there's a lot more folks in the room than normal and a lot more energy in the room. I'll explain that in a moment. We do want what I always get started, those students, we want to welcome you. On this green piece of paper that most of the adults have, this is our prayer sheet for our church and people have been calling in, writing, emailing, letting us know who we need to be praying for, what we need to be praying for. Let me remind you, adults and even students, feel free to take one home. Do not throw it away. Make it a part of your regular prayer time for those that are connected to and a part of our church. Last reminder before I pray, on the back of that sheet, those that serve in the military and on the mission field, please make it a point to pray for them on a very very regular basis.

I'm going to pray and we'll get started with a very special night tonight. Let's pray.

Father, as we come tonight in the name of Jesus Christ, we are grateful for this place and for these people, but more than that we're grateful that we have your word, that you have not left us without answers, you have not left us in the dark, in fact, you said that you were the light of the world. And so, Lord, that is our prayer tonight, that your light would shine in this place and that your word would be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. Guide us wherever we need to go so that when we leave tonight we're better equipped to live for you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Alright, tonight I want to welcome our student ministry who is here with us tonight. So if you're under 18 years of age, just give a good old shout tonight. 18, there we go. They're all here. So tonight, tonight's gonna be a little different, rather than doing half questions, half Bible study, we're going to do all questions tonight and rather than just doing a couple of questions where we have a lot of follow-up, we're actually going to do kind of a rapid fire session tonight with lots of questions. Now if you are just absolutely dying out there and saying, "I've gotta know more about whatever that is," please call my attention because I'm going to go pretty quick tonight.

Now I'm going to ask Mr. Paxton to come up real quick. He is our middle school pastor here. Last Wednesday night over at the well, the students wrote the questions. I need him to verify that these are, in fact, the questions. Sir?

"They are."

They are the questions, okay. So tonight has not been staged, fabricated, or altered in any way. These are the actual questions that our students have submitted to be answered tonight. Now before I go to any of the questions, adults, allow me to warn you, you're going to be impressed by their questions because oftentimes students ask better questions than adults because they have not become as jaded to life as we have, and they're a lot more honest and transparent. So they have been mixed up, they have been shuffled, and we're just going to begin.

What is your favorite Bible verse?

Well, that's like asking me which one of my kids is my favorite kid. I mean, which one do you pick? But one verse that I love to quote is Revelation 1:5, it says, "Unto him," who is Jesus, "who is the faithful witness, the first-begotten of the dead, the prince of the kings of the earth, who loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood." The reason I love that verse, I know John 3:16 is kind of that go-to verse but it just encapsulates not only the gospel message of our sin being washed but it describes Jesus as his always-been and always-will be. So question 1 down.

2. Why? Oh, that gets scary. Anytime we ask the question why, I get a little nervous. Why does God gives us challenges that make us mad and sometimes turn us away?

That's a really good question. Now we know that 1 Corinthians 10:13 says that there is no temptation that has ever come unto man that is not common to man by which God will give us an out. When you couple that with James 1:13 that says God does not tempt us to sin but sin takes place that when the lust of our eyes is enticed with the things of this world. The reason I quoted those two verses is it asked about the challenges that come in life. The challenges that come up in our life that God allows in our life are never there to turn us away, to anger us, or to cause us to have those types of emotions. Allow me to spin the question just a little bit. Just like if you are endeavoring an athletic pursuit, you allow yourself to undergo some physical constraints so that your body will grow stronger to be able to overcome a greater level of running distance or weights that are being lifted. Much like someone who's in the musical field will spend times pressuring through the frustrations of learning of various pieces of music so as to become more proficient. Allow me to challenge both adults and students, when there is a challenge in our life, we can either see it as an obstacle to keep us from where we desire to be, or the opportunity for God to grow us stronger so that we can become what he's called us to be. So in essence, the challenges in life are to make us stronger, not the opposite.

Next question: do you go to hell if you commit suicide?

I'm just seeing what y'all say. That is a very much propagated belief in our world that if one commits suicide, they cannot go to heaven and have to go to hell because their last act on earth was a sinful act. I think we all would have to agree that taking somebody's life even murdering of yourself is a sinful act. The problem with this theology of suicide

leads to hell is it presupposes that if you die with unconfessed sin, you go to hell. I've got news for all of us: whenever we die, we're going to die with unconfessed sin. You're going to. There are things that you have done to hurt people's feelings, to violate things that you don't even realize you've done, and so therefore we all die with unconfessed sin.

Here is the key aspect: it is Jesus Christ alone that keeps us from hell, not how much have you confessed and have you confessed it all. The Bible says call on the name of the Lord and you shall be saved. And so it is Jesus that determines whether we're in heaven or hell, not whether or not we've committed this sin or committed that sin. Allow me to remind us, James 2:10 says that if you've broken one of the laws, it's as if you've broken all of the laws. So I would re-ask that question, if someone tells a white lie to their teacher, do they automatically go to hell? And the reason I ask that question is I think sometimes we need to understand that in God's economy sin is sin and we oftentimes try to put a gradation system to it.

Moving onwards. How do I get better at reading the Bible?

Revolutionary concept. Are you ready? You open it up. How do you get better at doing anything? How do you get better at a sport? You actually go and practice it. How do you get better at music? You actually play it. How do you get better at any activity in life is the more that you do something, the better you will become.

Now if you have not become a part of your life as far as reading the Bible, young people or adults, please for the love of all things that are wonderful, don't begin in the book of Leviticus, although, students, when you get to chapter 18, it does get really interesting. I just want you to know. But when you get into some of those difficult passages of the Bible, at times it becomes a struggle because you lose interest or maybe all the details. People who have never opened the Bible and read for a consistent time, here is my framework for you. I always suggest that you begin with the gospel of John. Once you've read through the gospel of John, then I typically encourage people to read through the New Testament. Once you've read through the New Testament, then let's make our way back to the Old Testament because it tends to be very difficult with all the historical references and can we just be honest tonight? A lot of names that none of us can pronounce.

But to answer the question, the best way to get better at reading the Bible is to actually start reading the Bible. Last but not least, if you will read your Bible 15 minutes a day, 15 minutes, you will read through the entire Bible in one year. Why is that significant? The average American spends 45 minutes a day in the bathroom. So you can multi-task or take one-third of your bathroom time.

Question: when do you think Jesus will return?

I don't know. None of us know but what I do want to say, I want to give you two statements in regards to this. The first statement is this: we're closer today than we were yesterday and we'll be closer tomorrow than we are today. And there's a statement by a

dear old friend of mine who has recently passed away that I want to give all of us. I know some of our adults have heard this but, students, I want you to hear it as well, that nothing, nothing has to happen before Jesus comes back for us, a lot of stuff has to happen before Jesus comes back with us, and some of the stuff that has to happen before Jesus comes back with us may happen before Jesus comes back for us. Do you know what that means? It could happen at any moment.

So when will Jesus return? Remember all throughout scripture he said statements such as in a nanosecond or in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, that sound or a blast. So there's all those images in scripture to say that we ought to be prepared for Jesus to come back at any moment. I think one of the most dangerous things we can do is say, "Oh, he's not coming back for another 20 years," because the Bible states very specifically, it says in the day that you think not of, he comes. Now students, I'm going to give you some advice and adults too, if you see somebody advertising that Jesus is coming back on May 6 of this year, I can almost guarantee you it's not May 6 of this year because he says it'll be in the time that you know not of. But it will be soon.

Oh boy, this is going to be fun. Can you explain speaking in tongues?

This spiritual gift that is mentioned in the Bible in 1 Corinthians 12, the Lord gives us an entire chapter in 1 Corinthians 14 just about this one single solitary spiritual gift. I could go for an entire hour on this one because I think at times it becomes that confusing, and so allow me to summarize real briefly: it is listed as a spiritual gift in scripture, however, we have an entire chapter in 1 Corinthians 14 that gives us all the parameters of how it is to be implemented and how it is to be held accountable such as the Bible says that no more than two or three without an interpreter. It also says that he would rather, the Apostle Paul said, "I would rather you speak 10,000 normal words than 5 words of an unknown tongue." And as you go through 1 Corinthians 14, what we see is that its application and its usage is in a very limited capacity, but all of those parameters must be met.

But to the question: speaking in tongues according to scripture is when someone speaks in a language that according to the Bible is unknown, and another person is able to interpret what was said for the purpose of clarifying the communication of God to the people of God. But 1 Corinthians 14, an entire chapter in the Bible talking about all of how it is to be implemented and more importantly, how is it to be held accountable so that it is done God's way and not man's way.

Oh, this is a good question. Why is the Bible so important?

Allow me to answer this since we have students here tonight, allow me to answer this from an academic perspective. Why is the Bible so important? Because in any field of study, by the way, I would say the Bible is the field of study of life, in any field of study you have to have a measuring stick, you have to have a guide to determine is that angle of the triangle, is it a right triangle, is it not a right triangle. How do we know? Because it will either be 90 degrees or it will not be 90 degrees. And so whether it is mathematics,

whether it is in sports when they say in order to play this position at a certain school, you have to run a certain time in the 40 yard dash, we use those as measuring sticks that you're either above or you're below, you're to the right, you're to the left. You have to have something to use as the guide for life.

Why is the Bible so important for our life? It is that measuring stick for our life. It tells us how to handle all the problems of life, how to know all the things to believe in life, and how to handle every situation in life. Now I've had young people through the years say, "Well, the Bible just doesn't address the situation." Let me encourage you: read the book of Proverbs. The book of Proverbs right in the middle of your Bible deals with every practical subject matter in the world, particularly relationships, money, entertainment, free time, all the things of life the book of Proverbs handles. You say, "I read through Proverbs, it didn't handle everything." Go to the book of Ecclesiastes. In the book of Ecclesiastes a man who we know as Solomon said he tried everything under the sun and here's what he thinks about it. And so the practical matters of life are there in scripture as well as the deep matters of life. It is our measuring stick for life. That's why it's so important.

It says time, by the way, these are handwritten so if I have to do like this, it's because my eyes are getting older. It says time is not the same for God, one year for us could be a day for him, how do we know God didn't use evolution to make us?

That's a really good question, in fact, it's based on the book of 2 Peter 3:8 where it says that a day with the Lord is as 1,000 years and 1,000 years is as if a day, and oftentimes that verse has been taken and put all the way back in the book of Genesis when it says on day 1 he said, "Let there be light," on day 2, there was the firmament, etc. etc. And many people have said, "Well, is it possible that a day back in Genesis 1 was really 1,000 years or maybe even a longer time period?" We call this the day/age theory. Now the question is because the Bible says that a day is as if 1,000 years and 1,000 years as if a day, could it not be that possibly God used that process in creation? The answer is no for this reason, when you go back and read 2 Peter 3, the context of the passage – now students, when I say context, even adults, what that means is the verse before it and the verse behind it has nothing to do with creation, it has everything to do with the return of Jesus Christ. It's not talking about Genesis, it's actually talking about the book of Revelation where it says that a day to the Lord as if 1,000 years and 1,000 years as if a day.

Now two questions ago somebody asked the question: when will Jesus return? How many days has it been since Jesus Christ ascended into heaven in Acts 1? It's been 2,000 days? How days has it been if a day as if 1,000 years, 1,000 years as if a day, how long has it been? Two days. That's just a weekend, folks. In God's economy it has not been very long. Yes, the Bible says a day is as if 1,000 years and 1,000 years as if a day, however, in light of the book of Genesis, 2 Peter 3 is not in the context of creation.

Next question: which Bible character do you relate to the most?

Well, a lot of them. You know, this is one of those questions where when you pick somebody to relate to, oftentimes you assume because of their great characteristics. I am choosing a character tonight because of his not so great characteristics, a man by the name of Peter. You say, "Well, why would you pick Peter?" Well, the Bible says that he wasn't really skinny, he was probably kind of a portly guy. I got that covered. You say, "Well, how do we know he was a little thick?" Well, in John 20, he and John ran to the empty tomb and John beat him so we assumed Peter was a little bit bigger. Peter one night went fishing and couldn't catch any fish and I'm not a real good fisherman. But mainly the reason I identify with Peter is he was always just a little too quick to open his mouth, and he would stick his foot in his mouth and he would say things before he thought about them. But most importantly and the reason I choose him tonight on behalf of not just myself but maybe a lot of us, it was Peter who said that he would do anything for Jesus and the night of Jesus' crucifixion, he denied knowing him. And I think and I hope maybe I'm not the only one in the room that that kind of resonates with. We do a lot of, "Jesus, I'll do anything, I'll go anywhere, I'll be anything you want me to be," and then when the times get tough, we get scared, we get nervous and at times we end up in places we shouldn't be and saying things we shouldn't say. But here's the great news about Peter: when Jesus rose from the dead, he brought Peter aside, put his arm around him and he commissioned Peter to do great things on his behalf. In fact, Peter was the one who preached the famous Pentecost sermon in Acts 2. Why do I love Peter, because a guy who messed up all the time, put his foot in his mouth, and even denied knowing Jesus, God used him in a mighty mighty way later on in his life.

So that being said: how did all the pieces of the Bible get compiled after they were written? Why are the books compiled in the order that they are?

Allow me to do this in 60 seconds or less. By the way, most college courses can't even complete this question in 16 weeks. So in 60 seconds or less, throughout time and history, the Lord has done two things: he has inspired people to write scripture, and he after it has been inspired, he has preserved that scripture through the ages for folks like you and I to be able to read, learn and study by. That being said, throughout the process of time, the people of God and the very careful prayerful attitude toward God, have sought out his judgment and wisdom on what was ordained and inspired by God and what was not. Simple example. You open up your New Testament, you've got four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. However, there were dozens of "gospels" that were written in the first century and not only did you have the apostles themselves saying, "I didn't really write that, or he didn't really write that," the church as a whole gathered together and said, "No, this is what God has inspired. This is what he has not."

Now the order of the books is a whole different question for when you look at the Old Testament, your Old Testament is not in the same order as a Jewish Old Testament. Your Old Testament in the Bible that you hopefully have in front of you tonight or on your phone or your tablet, it begins in the Old Testament with the law, the Torah, the Pentateuch, the first five books of Moses, then it goes to the writings and to the prophets. The Jewish Old Testament goes Torah, prophets, writings. Of course, the Jewish Bible does not have the New Testament in it. And so what you see in your Bible as far as the

order is concerned, you have the first establishment of the rules, the laws, and the covenants of God, then you have the people of God realizing they're not very good at keeping the covenants of God and the commandments of God and seeing what a simple sorry state of folks we really are. Then the prophets proclaim, "Don't worry, even though you've sinned, the Messiah is going to come." The gospel is the Messiah comes, he lives, he dies, he raises up, the church begins, it lives, and then Jesus comes back. There is the Bible in a nutshell from beginning to end. Allow me to go back a few questions. Do not begin reading in the book of Leviticus or you will get lost real quick. But that is the reason or the order of the books of the Bible.

What do you do when one of your friends rejects God?

This isn't a fun question because, young people, let me share with you something: the older you get, the more friends you'll have that experience this question because typically people reject the things of God or the person of God when the difficult things in life come up.

What do you do? Well, several things. First thing and I know this is going to sound like a Sunday school answer, some of you are saying, "What's a Sunday school answer?" Let me tell you what a Sunday school answer is, students. Some of the adults have heard this but y'all may not have. A Sunday school answer is a little something like this. Fourth grade Sunday school class, students are all there, the teacher is teaching the class and says, "Okay, students, I'm going to describe something. You tell me what it is." The students says, "Okay, great, what is it?" They're sitting there in Sunday school and the teacher says, "What I'm describing for you is a small, furry, little animal, has four feet, a tail, and likes to eat nuts. What is it?" Little girl raises her hand and says, "Well, teacher, it sounds like a squirrel but I'm gonna say Jesus because we're in Sunday school." A Sunday school answer is it doesn't matter what the question is, Jesus is the answer.

This is going to sound like a Sunday school answer but it's the true answer to the question. When somebody you know is rejecting the person or of the things of God, what can you do for them, the first and most important thing to do is pray for them. Pray that God will get their attention. Pray that their defenses will come down. Pray they will be open to truth.

The second thing you can do is encourage them. Speak positively, communicate with them, even when they say possibly harmful or hurtful things like, "Well, how can you believe in light of this? Or why would God allow this?" Continue to be encouraging and when they come up with questions like how could God allow this, say, "You know what? I don't really know the answer to that question but if you'll give me a few days, I'll go research it and find out what I can and I'd love to come back and talk with you." Go and call somebody you know, you trust, hopefully your parents, student pastor, me, somebody else, and come alongside and go and encourage them and say, "Hey, I know you're struggling with this, but let me help you in this direction."

So you pray for them, you encourage them, and in a positive manner, try to answer the questions or the struggles they're going through. One thing I will say is this: God gave you two ears and a mouth for a reason, sometimes you need to listen more than you talk and just hear them out and listen to what is going on in their lives. Oftentimes they will be struggling with things maybe you've never struggled with and you don't have a reference point and you say, "You know, I've never been in that situation, that's never happened in my home, that's never happened with my parents, that's never happened in my life, but let me see if I can find somebody who has walked through that problem or situation and allowed God to help them through it, and I'd love to come back and talk to you again." So be encouraging, pray for them and help them along.

Next question. How do you, that's, I guess, aimed at me, disciple others?

That's an interesting question because we have these guys in the Bible known as disciples and there's this thing that comes up within their life that, to me, was mind-boggling at one point until I realized what was really happening in the background. Think about the story in the gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We know about the apostles, Peter and James and John and even Judas, and all those guys. The Bible says that Jesus is just walking along and all of a sudden he says, "Hey, you two, come and follow me." And it says they dropped their nets, leave their business and just they're gone. They leave their homes. They leave their financial means and ways of providing and they just go. You say, "What was happening there?" That phrase "come follow me" was so significant in Jewish culture that I think oftentimes we miss it.

Many of us have heard of a bar mitzvah, it's a celebration of a young Jewish man's life on the last day of his 12th year. At a bar mitzvah, a young man, two things took place in his life. 1. He was betrothed which is a fancy word for engaged to his future bride. Yes, guys, can you imagine that at age 12? Oh, by the way, she was probably either wearing diapers or not yet born. That's a whole other question. Secondly, he was given his apprenticeship for the type of occupation that he would have. It was at a bar mitzvah that a rabbi, a Jewish leader who, by the way, in that context was not only a religious leader but he was also a political leader and somebody who everybody wanted to be, that that rabbi would come up to this young man and say, "Come follow me," which meant, "I want you now to follow." It literally means to follow in the dust of my feet. Everywhere I go, you go. Everything I experience, you experience.

So when it says how do you disciple people, what it really means there is we're obviously talking about spiritual things here, is just follow right behind me and what I experience, you experience, what I do, you do. And what that means in everyday life, particularly on a student's level, it doesn't mean that they sit next to you in every class and they follow you everywhere you go, and sit on the bench next to you at a ball game, what that means is they watch what you're doing as someone who seems to be a little further in your faith and they model and imitate their life after what you're doing.

Now the question was: how do you do it? Well, as one who's in the front, you've got to look back and make sure they're where they're supposed to be. And so you encourage that

person and say, "Hey, you need to be here. You need to be there." And so discipleship simply is having someone following in your footsteps and as the discipler, making sure that they're right behind you as you walk.

Next question. What is the most important book in the Bible in your opinion?

Well, it asked my opinion so I'm going to give it. Revelation. You say, "Why the book of Revelation?" Because if you don't have the final chapter, you don't have all the story. I love the book of Revelation. Most people are scared of the book of Revelation but I love the book of Revelation because if the Bible ended in the book of Jude, we'd all be confused. I mean, we all would be confused because we say, "How does this finish? How does it wrap up?"

Now I'm one of those weird ducks, y'all have already figured that out, when I get a book of fiction, and I don't read a whole lot of fiction books, I like nonfiction, but when I do read a fictional book, I'm really bad about reading the last chapter first because sometimes I don't get to finish the story and I just want to know how it ends up. When you read through the Bible and you see the prophecies about Jesus, the life of Jesus, the promise of his return, if you don't read the last chapter, then you don't know how it all ends.

Now young people, obviously you're our special guests tonight, you are in a part or, I guess, maybe a stage of life that's eerily similar to where I was at your age. Right now we are turning on the news every day and we're hearing words that we haven't heard in a long time in this country like nuclear armament, bomb shelter, the potential of ICBM's, intercontinental ballistic missiles. How about this little place called North Korea? China is not real happy. There's a lot of turmoil in the world. Young people, it was different countries and a different day, but when I was about your age, we had the same issues going on in our culture and I remember that I had a student pastor who encouraged me to read the book of Revelation. I said, "Okay." So I read the book of Revelation. I came back. He said, "Did you understand it?" I said, "Not a thing." And he said, "Did the world end in a nuclear holocaust?" I said, "No." He goes, "That's right. You're worried a lot about something that's never going to happen."

That is so important about the issues of our day because everyday we turn on the news or we get a newscast feed, or we watch or listen to a podcast, somebody tells us that if we don't change this, the world's going to end and everybody's going to die and that's not how the Bible ends. Let me tell you how it all wraps up: when Jesus comes back. So to answer the question, in my opinion without the book of Revelation, you have a lot of unanswered question.

Next question. Have the end times already begun?

Well, that depends on how you define the end times, but technically when Jesus ascended on high in Acts 1 and when he left and the angel said, "As he departed so shall he return," the end times technically began at that moment. So we've been in the end times for a long

time, however, Jesus made this statement in Matthew 24. He talked about a fig tree and he said, "When you see the fig tree begin to bud, when you see the leaves begin to come forth, know that the time is near." Now technically when you go back into your Old Testament, that fig tree is more often than not an illustration used of the people of Israel who for almost 2,000 years were displaced, but since 1948 actually have their homeland. But generically speaking per the last question, when you read the book of Revelation and you see the things that are going to happen in the end and you begin to see things happening in your world, you begin to say, "You know what? We really are closer today than we were yesterday."

So the "end times" actually began the day Jesus ascended but the Bible makes it clear that there will be an increase of things as we get closer to the end. Obviously you read Revelation and you can see some of the things that are happening.

Next question. I feel like I can only get "on fire" for God at or after camp or mission trip, so how do I do that now?

That's a really good question. We call it the youth camp high. Now I'm going to answer this question in somewhat of an odd way. Why is it that a week at camp or a weekend at a Disciple Now or a special event, why is it that at that time and in that place we tend to hear God more clearly and be more serious about the things of God than during everyday life? It's real simple: the distractions of everyday life have been removed from that experience, and so when we get away from all the things that grab our attention in everyday life, God easily can get our attention. So you say, "How do I do that now?" That which is distracting you or keeping you from hearing the voice of and the things of God, if it's keeping you from him, then maybe we ought to practice removing it from our lives for periods of time so that we can experience him even when we're not at camp or on the "mountain high."

There's a parable in Mark 4 that Jesus tells called the parable of the sower and he talks about a seed that has gone forth, it has produced fruit, in other words, it's had some good times with the Lord, and then it becomes unfruitful, and it says the way that that happened was because of the deceitfulness of riches, the cares of this world, and the distractions of other things. So anytime we feel like that we're not as close to the Lord as we think we should be, it's typically one of those three things: the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches and/or the distractions of life. Why does a camp experience or a weekend retreat seem to more foster the things of God? Because we typically allow those distractions to be out of our life for a set period of time.

Next one. Are Allah and God the same entity?

No. That is what the media would love to tell you. That's what the politically correct individuals of this world would love to tell you. But understand that Allah, that name, is the god of the Islamic or Muslim faith. Now without getting into all the semantics and all the details, there is no way that the god of the Islamic faith known as Allah and the God of the Bible, the one true God, can be the same entity and here is why: beyond a variety

of characteristic differences, when you go all the way back into the book of Genesis 22, the Islamic faith believes that Abraham sacrificed Ishmael on Mount Moriah and the Bible records that it was Isaac on Mount Moriah. In other words, the Islamic people stake their entire religious, political and livelihood claim on Ishmael's line whereas the Bible stakes it all on Isaac's line. You say, "Why is that so critical?" Because you see two different stories and thus two different gods.

Now Islam and Christianity are sociologically the same in that they're both monotheistic, they both claim to worship only one god, however, the god of Islam is very very different than the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible says, "For God so loved the world that he actually gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." The god of Islam says, "Destroy, kill, maim and blow up people and maybe you'll get to get to paradise one day." Two completely different gods.

Next question: what does it take to have a good prayer life with God?

Same answer as reading the Bible, you do it without distraction. If you attempt to pray while being on social media, watching tv, and listening to the radio at the same time, it's not going to be real successful. My best prayer time is in two places. Y'all are gonna think I'm strange but y'all know that already. I have a real good prayer life in the shower. Do you know why? Because the noise of the water and where I'm located in my home, nobody can bother me, nothing can distract me, alright? I can't hear the phone ring. None of those things. So that's a great place.

Another place I love to pray is in the car. Now those of you that don't have a driver's license yet, don't go home and say, "Well, the pastor said just get out and start driving." That's not what I said. Because in that environment, again, I don't listen to the radio when I'm in the car. I don't listen to, you know, streaming music etc., usually I have it really quiet unless my kids are in it, but that's a whole other saga. But when I'm driving by myself, a great place to pray. What I'm saying by that is how do you improve your prayer life is allow yourself to be in some positions, young people, this is going to be such a foreign concept to you and even some of you adults, it is actually beneficial at times in your life to have no noise, to not have a constant barrage of information and noise and static. A great prayer life typically begins with a quiet place, in a quiet moment, and as you do it, just like with anything else, as you become more repetitious, you will get better at it.

So the question what does it take? The first thing is you've got to remove the distractions, you've got to get in a place that is somewhat quiet, and then you've just got to focus on the things of God. Now one thing I will say and we actually practice this in our home. The question wasn't asked this but the question is how to pray, that's the next question. We practice this in our home. It's really simple. It's what's called the ACTS prayer. This stands for adoration, it stands for confession, it stands for thanksgiving. I apologize for my bad writing, my dad's a pharmacist and I inherited it. And this is supplication. Now what that means is when we pray, the first thing we do is we adore God, we recognize

him for who he is. The second thing we do is we confess our sin to him. We thank him for the blessings and the gifts and the things of life. And then we ask him for stuff.

Why is this important? Most of our prayer life is we get in the car, we get in the shower, nobody can hear and we say, "Okay, God, here's my laundry list, here's my Christmas wish. I need it now, now, now, now, now." What this allows you to do is focus on the person of God, the sin in your own life, thanking him for the goodness of life, and then asking him for the things of life. Young people, I learned that when I was in fourth grade and I haven't forgotten it yet. We even use it in our home when we as a family go around and pray together.

Alright, moving on because time is fleeting. What does it mean to be a fully committed Christian while being 13 years old?

That's a really good question because I've met 13 year olds who are more mature Christians than some 43 year olds. The Bible speaks of particularly in 1 John 1 and 2, it speaks of the fact that as believers in Jesus Christ, we are born again and then we grow in our faith. Now if you are saved, become a Christian at age 8, that means you've had five years to grow. If you became a Christian at age 8 and you're now 43, you now have 35 years to grow. The question is have we grown during that time period?

What does it look like for a 13 year old? Again, this is kind of a subjective question, subjective answer but I'll make it very hopefully simple, that if you as a 13 year old, okay, recognize as a believer in Jesus Christ that the word of God needs to have a prominent position in your life, that the fellowship of the people of God needs to be a regular part of your life, that prayer needs to be a daily part of your life, and the decision to choose the things of God and to reject the things of sin is at the forefront of the mind of your life, I would say that at age 13 or maybe even age 43, you'll be a pretty committed Christian at that point, because unfortunately, adults, I'm just going to be honest, there's a lot of us in our 40s and 50s that cannot say that about ourselves. At 13, hear me out, you're not going to believe me, young people, but just work with me. I know you're not going to. Here we go. It is easier to be a committed Christian at 13 than 43, and because though you don't believe me, the distractions of life are not nearly now what they will be in 30 years. I used to think my friends were a distraction, that was nothing compared to my own children. So that being said, I love them but they're a distraction. Life is a distraction. Everything is a distraction. And so at 13 years of age, 14 years of age, 15 years of age, take advantage of the place you are in life now to get serious about the things of God at age 13 so that hopefully those patterns in life will continue through the rest of your years.

How do I share the gospel with people at school without throwing the gospel at them?

Literally do not throw your Bible at them. It says how do I share without throwing the gospel? That is why tonight is so critical. I am a large, huge, massive proponent of answering people's questions. Rather than saying, "Well, you're wrong, the Bible is right," and just spitting out a bunch of verses and telling them how bad they are and

they're going to burn in hell and it's going to be awful, I'm a big believer in saying, "Why don't you believe? What are your struggles? What are your issues? What can I do to help you address some of these things?" And so as you share the gospel with someone and you share the truth of Jesus Christ, if objections come up or, "Well, I don't believe that Jesus can be the only way. I don't believe the Bible is truly reliable." Rather than just forcing the rest of the gospel message down them, say, "Well, okay, time out. Let's talk about that." But here's the deal: once you talk about the reliability of the Bible, once you talk about the validity, the exclusivity of Jesus always taking it back to the gospel message, it's real simple, we have sinned, he has paid the sacrifice, when we believe, he saves us and forgives us. That's the simple gospel but there are people that struggle with it and so we don't throw it at them but we lead them and we walk them and we answer the questions desiring them to believe in Jesus as well.

Why do people not believe in Jesus if the Bible gives proof?

Well, allow me to quote a line from a movie that I saw this last weekend entitled "The Case for Christ." If you have not seen it, it is the story of the book and the life of Lee Strobel who's a former Chicago Tribune journalist. It's a great movie. By the way, adults, those of you that are my age and maybe a little older, you'll love watching it, the entire movie is set in the 70s and the 80s and they got the clothes perfect the entire movie. I mean, there are, woo, I mean, they raided the thrift stores of all of America to do that one.

But that being said, there's a sideline or a secondary story that goes through other than just his search for the truth of the resurrection. As a reporter, one of the jobs that Lee Strobel has in life is the crime beat, the police officers and the criminals etc. Well, in the movie and it's based on his life, there is a young man who because of his research and his erroneous reporting, Lee Strobel helps send him to prison. Then later on he realizes that he was actually innocent and so they go through the process of fixing the mess. He goes back to this young man who's in the hospital for being beaten up in jail, and he tells him, he says, "I am so sorry. I am completely at fault." He said, "I didn't have the facts." To which this young man looks at him and says, "You didn't want to see the facts."

Why that is so important to this question, why do people not believe in Jesus if the Bible gives proof, it's not that the Bible doesn't give proof, it's that they come with a preconceived idea that it's not true or that he is not true, and so rather than seeing the facts for what the facts are, they automatically have judged the facts before they hear the facts. I cannot tell you how many times people have told me, "Well, the Jesus of the Bible, it can't be true. There's no way he can be true." And so I say, "Well, have you read the Bible?" "No, I haven't read it but it can't be true." And so I encourage people who say the Bible's not true, just read it. Read the gospel of John. Come back and let's discuss it. Most people who claim that the Bible is not true have never even bothered to read it. They have a preconceived idea.

Is the Old Testament or the New Testament your favorite?

That's another one of those trick questions. Let me answer it this way: the New Testament tells you what to believe, the Old Testament shows you how to live it. I want you to think about that and, adults, work with me here too. The New Testament, we have the Roman road, that we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We have the story of the wages of sin is death, that God commended his love, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, if you call on the name of the Lord, you'll be saved, these truths and these nuggets in scripture. But you go all the way back in the Old Testament and you have the stories of Noah and Moses and Joseph and David and Solomon and all these guys that illustrate for us what sin really looks like, show us what God's grace looks like when it's applied to somebody's life, what does faith, how is it demonstrated? So I love the New Testament for its doctrinal teaching, I love the Old Testament for its practical illustration of the New Testament teaching.

What is the importance of memorizing scripture?

Well, the Bible makes it very clear in Psalm 119:105 that we are to hide the word of God in our heart so that we do not sin. The importance of memorizing scripture is so that when you find yourself in a situation, the words of God are recalled in your life to know how to handle that situation. Now again, whether you're answering a skeptic that's at school that says the Bible's not reliable, or whether you're struggling with a temptation or the opportunity to do something you know you have no business doing, that scripture will come to your mind, it will come into your life and the words of God, I mean, that's God speaking to us. So when we find ourselves in that situation, that scripture comes to mind, it's almost as if God's giving us a neon sign saying, "This is how you respond in this situation." The Bible makes it clear we hide his word in our hearts so we do not sin against him. It is very, in fact, years ago somebody taught me this and for years I put it at the front of my Bible, it was a little statement, "This book will keep me from sin but sin will keep me from this book." And so memorizing scripture is very important to living a righteous life.

It says I've been a Christian for a while now, I do a devotional and I've been praying, I just don't feel his presence. What do I do or what should I do, or if anything?

Your relationship with Jesus Christ is not based on feelings, it is based on fact. Feelings come, feelings go. It may determine what you ate for breakfast that morning in how you feel. And the reason I use that hopefully humorous illustration is we live in a world today that everybody wants to respond by their feelings. Feelings can be wrong. Feelings can be erroneous. Feelings can be misconstrued. But the facts are the facts and the Bible makes it clear, John 1:12, it says if we believe in the Son of God, Jesus Christ, we have become the sons of God. The Bible says in 1 John 1:9 if we confess our sins, he's faithful, he's just to forgive us of our sins whether we feel like we're forgiven or not. Psalm 103:12 says this, that our sins when he forgives them are as far as the east is from the west.

So the reason I bring up those verses is that when we don't feel it, we have to push through the feelings with the facts. There's a lot of things in life I don't feel like doing but need to be done and should be done, and oftentimes when I push through the feelings, the

facts supersede the feelings. What that basically means is don't quit and don't give up, press through. And by the way, that is something that is not communicated enough in our culture today. Our culture says if it gets tough, just quit. That's not what scripture says. Scripture says that when you get through those valleys of life, you press through because there's a mountaintop that will eventually come.

How do you know it's God's voice and not the devil trying to persuade you?

Well, that's an interesting question because the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 11:14 that marvel not that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. In other words, oftentimes the devil will come to us and try to convince us that we're supposed to do something that on the outside looks like something we should be participating in and we have no business participating in. So the question is how do I know if it's God's voice? How do I know if it's the devil's voice? Again, I keep repeating myself so forgive me: what does the Bible say?

Now if you find yourself in a situation and, adults, we addressed this a little bit last week but for the sake of the students, if you have a decision to make or if there's a temptation in life, if there's a struggle in life, let me give you a real quick go-to plan. The first thing you do: find out what does the Bible say about this issue? 2. Pray about it. 3. Seek out somebody who you trust that is further along in their relationship with Jesus than you are and ask them what they think about that scenario or situation. Oftentimes the devil preys upon us because of our lack of willingness to go through those steps in our life. So how can we know whose voice I'm listening to? Is it verified by scripture? Have I prayed through it? And have others guided me in conjunction with my prayer life and with scripture?

Could you explain the Trinity?

Nope, can't do. Alright, next question. Now I'm serious about that. There was a theologian about 1,500 years ago who wrote a book about the Trinity and after 250 pages said there was no way he could explain the Trinity. Some of you are thinking, "What's the Trinity?" The Trinity is the fact that the Bible says in Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one God." But there is evidence that God is Father, Son or Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, three in one, and this is what we call the Trinity.

How do we explain that? Now there's all kinds of illustrations that people have tried to use, the fact that an egg is one entity but with three different parts, that you've got a football with the leather, the bladder, the air, and that without all three parts it doesn't function the way it's supposed to, all those kind of simple illustrations. But the best illustration for the Trinity in all the world is standing right in front of you. Right here. I'm it. I'm the best illustration. You say, "Well, how are you the best illustration?" Well, I am the son of Ron Meyers. I am the wife of Tracy Meyers. The husband, I'm sorry! Well, that outta make Facebook tonight. Let me go back. I'm the son of Ron Meyers. I'm the husband, woo, of Tracy, Tracy Meyers is my wife. And I'm the dad of Marshall, George and Jonathan Meyers. I have three very distinct roles but I'm only one person and when I

am with my dad, he is not confused and I am not confused about my role and relationship to him versus my children or my wife. In other words, when we're all in the room and there have been times where my dad, my wife, Tracy, and all my kids are in the same room and nobody's confused about how I relate to all of them and yet I'm only one person. However every illustration that we use for the Trinity breaks down because currently right now at this very moment, my dad, my wife, and my children are all in three different geographical locations and I cannot be in all three places at one time and God is able to do so because he's omnipresent. Every illustration breaks down, however, anytime we use an illustration of one entity with three mechanisms or parts, we're giving a picture of the Trinity. One of the greatest theologians couldn't explain it so that's about as close as I can get.

It says one of the 10 Commandments is to honor your father and mother. Correct. But if your parent is not honorable and does not have a relationship with Christ, what do you do?

That is a really good question and the best way to answer that is actually in the book of Ephesians 5 and into chapter 6 where it talks about that children should obey their parents but then it says that fathers and parents should not provoke their children unto evil. It says when your parents are not honorable. Now again, I don't know who wrote this question, I appreciate who wrote this question, but one of the struggles we have is defining what is honorable. Just because they tell you you have to go to bed when you're supposed to, does that mean they're not honorable or are they actually doing things that are completely contrary to the things of God? One of the things that is so important in scripture is what the Bible talks about authority. There is authority that is in our life for a reason and for a purpose. In fact, the 10 Commandments or one of them that was quoted, honor your father and mother, interestingly did you know there's a second half to that commandment? It says so your days shall be lengthened and made long.

When I was 14, 15, even 16, 17 years of age, I thought my parents were just not real bright. Then I became an adult and realized they were a lot smarter than I thought they were. And a lot of the things that were placed in my life that I didn't like from my parents, I thought they were for my pain but they were actually for my protection. And so I think, students, where we have to draw the line there is are parents requiring or asking us to do things that we don't like or would wish they were different, or are they encouraging, advocating things that are completely dishonoring to God and that opens up a whole different question. So that being said, it's a difficult balance but understand that there is authority in our lives that we have to respect, however, Acts 5:29 says we obey the laws of God over the laws of man.

How do I bring back someone who left God because of hardship?

Again, it goes back to a previous question. Pray for them. Encourage them. Answer their questions.

How are you or how can you be a Christian in a non-Christian household?

Alright, young people, one of you asked this question so I'm going to answer this. I don't know what that's like. I was very blessed. I grew up in a home where my mom and dad were believers. I have a wife, just making that clear, that is a believer. All three of my children are believers. So I cannot in exact measure answer your question. So if you asked this question or if it's important to you, I would encourage you to find somebody who's walked in your shoes. I don't know what it's like to have parents that don't believe or brothers and sisters that do not believe. I do know what it is like to have roommates in college, or friends, or coworkers that do not believe. It's a completely different context than your immediate family. And so one thing I would encourage you, though, and this is from actually 1 Corinthians 7 talking about a husband and a wife and it's talking about two adults who are lost and don't know Jesus and one of them gets saved and how do they respond to the lost spouse, and the answer is you don't abandon, you don't quit, and it actually says there in 1 Corinthians 7 that your life of godliness will make an impact and share a testimony with them.

So again, I've never actually particularly had this scenario as a young person to my parents or siblings, and so for an exact answer, young person, whoever wrote the question, let me encourage you to find somebody, seek out somebody who's walked in your shoes who actually knows what it's like to be a follower of Jesus in a home where others are not. But I would say this scripturally speaking, you're not to abandon, not to quit or give up, you're to be found faithful in all things.

How can you hunger daily for God?

That's a really good question because I had a man who is very impactful in my life make this statement. He said, "If you don't run into the devil face-to-face every day, you might be heading the same direction he is." So how do you hunger for the things of God? You have to just set your mind to it, that the moment your feet hit the floor, you're going to do what Matthew 6:33 says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you."

Now I'm not an expert in this but I can tell you what Jeff Meyers does every morning. By the way, I'm not a morning person at all. I hit snooze three times every morning, alright? Sometimes I'm tempted to hit the fourth time. But before my feet hit the ground, there on my bed and very groggy before I have coffee kind of state, I have somewhat of this conversation with God. I'll say, "Okay, God, here we go." In other words, it may not sound very theological but the first thought of my mind is, "Alright, God, we're gonna do this thing today and I'm gonna desire what you have for me this day." If you wait until lunch time to do that, woo, the devil's gonna get ahold of you real quick on that day. So I'm not a morning person by nature but where did I tell you one of my best prayer times was? The shower. So at some point in the first hour of my day, I have spent some alone time with God.

Here we go: is it okay to question why or how God is real?

I can give you a good biblical answer to this: read the book of Job. It's not job, it's Job. The book of Job before Psalms is a man who has all kinds of hardship come upon his life, he questions his own existence, he questions the existence of God, and when you get to chapter 41 and 42, God rewards him for his faithfulness. It is not a sin to question, to contemplate or to say... And I'm going to be honest with you tonight as we kind of wrap up, let me tell you why I can answer these questions: I've asked them. I can answer questions that I've asked myself. I've sat up at night, I've contemplated, "God, are you really there? What's really going on? How do you explain this? Are you really one or are you three in one?" All these kind of questions, I've thought on those things and it is going through the process of seeking God and knowing the mind and the will of God that eventually just like Job will get you to the other side with God.

When Jesus ran back to the temple like when he ran from his mom, how was that not disobedience?

The story that's referring to when Jesus was 12 years of age, they went to the temple for Passover. He stayed behind. His parents went on back to Nazareth. The next day they discovered that Jesus was not there. When they came back they said, "Jesus, what are you doing?" To which Jesus makes a very interesting statement, "Did you not know I would be about my Father's business?" Interesting in that story, Jesus was not disobeying his parents, Jesus was staying back and talking with the theologians about the truth of God's word, after all, he was God in flesh. The importance of that story is nowhere in that story do you have Mary and Joseph saying, "Jesus, you're coming with us now. Don't you stay behind." They just got to walking and hanging out and, "Where did he go?" So it's really not a story of disobedience as much as it is a story of the priority of Jesus.

One last question: how can you constantly stay grounded in the word?

Open it up. That's how you can constantly stay grounded in the word. If it becomes a paperweight or something you do not use, you cannot be grounded in it. The more you use it, the more you'll know and the more you'll have access to all the questions and the things of life.

Before I pray, before we dismiss, I want to make two things very very very clear tonight. I am the husband of Tracy Meyers. I just want to be clear. Don't want any questions. And adults, would you help me thank all the young people for the questions tonight? Way to go, guys! Thank y'all, students, for asking the questions. I'm going to pray and we're going to get out of here.

Lord, we love you. Thank you that your word does have answers and that we are free to ask the questions. And God, I pray for the questions that are on our hearts that maybe didn't get voiced tonight, or maybe deep down inside we're pondering. May you cause us to seek you out, may you cause us to open your word, may you cause us to go to somebody we trust so that we would have your answer for our life. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Go bless. Get outta here. Thank you, students.