

"Hair on Fire?" Pt 5

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We're going to pray, we're going to give thanks. Jim Dixon had surgery or had surgery on Friday and recovering well. We want to give thanks for that and also Rensy, as you may know, is pregnant and is bedridden, has been bedridden for about five weeks. Bed rest. Excuse me, bed rest. So we're going to pray for her, okay, for Rensy and the baby and stuff. So let's pray.

Lord God, first we come to you giving you thanks for this last week and how you've watched over us. We thank you for rain when it has come but we also thank you for sunny days and we thank you for gardens that are doing well and just very grateful that you have sustained us day-by-day. We thank you for hearing us as we pray for Jim Dixon, we pray that you would continue to help him to grow stronger and stronger and we ask you to continue to watch over him and we thank you for hearing us. We pray for Rensy and the baby. We ask you, Lord, to give her physical strength and emotional strength in the midst of this, and we pray for her body to be well and that she and baby will be very healthy and that when the day comes for the birth, that both will be fine as the birth goes on and after the birth. We ask you, Lord, to watch over her especially during this time. Bless us, Lord, in this class as we look again one last time at media and as we think about all of that. We ask you to help us and be our guide and our strength. In Jesus' name. Amen.

All right, this is the last class on this. My two week class, did you appreciate that, anybody appreciate that? Two weeks, here we are three weeks past. Okay, so it's "Hair on Fire?" Validate before you palpitate. Authenticate before you propagate. So just a quick review. Hanlon's razor is really helpful and as I've said before, it's really helpful not only when you're thinking about media but just as you're thinking about people, people that you interact with at work and at home, never ascribe to malice that which is adequately explained as incompetence. I find that really really beneficial.

So kind of the working principles as we're dealing with media, both the way it's reported and also what is reported. So it's go to be both, the way it's reported, why it is reported. Suspend judgment. Assume innocence. Accusation does not mean guilt. I don't know how often to say that because it just gets put out there that way. Remember Hanlon's razor which I already showed to you. Reporters are human. Ask yourself are there other reasonable explanations, other reasonable explanations. What's the media angle?

Remember we looked at the different positions of cameras and those things and we actually did a little practice with a situation just recently. And don't be part of over reporting. We talked about the connection of over reporting and suicide clusters, mass shootings, and terrorism, both recruitment and the acts of terrorism.

So again, validate before you palpitate, authenticate before you propagate. And then last week we went through several studies that showed that the prime emotions that actually fuel propagation, spreading around news and things like that, the three major emotions. The one that shocked me was the last one, it was awe, that it actually rated almost as often as anger did. Awe, you know, when you're amazed at something or you actually want to be humorous and send Calvin and Hobbs jokes, you know, or whatever. I mean, that gets shared just as much almost as anything fueled by anger and anxiety, but anger and anxiety both fuel heavily a lot that is spread around and it becomes a part of our participating in over reporting. We talked about that last week, so that's just catching everybody up to speed.

So I want to come back to scripture on this. I want us to look very briefly at Titus 2:11 through chapter 3, verse 5, and the reason why I want us to look at this is I want us, I want you to know, okay, let me put it this way. When I was a security policeman in the Air Force, every post we went to had SSI's, special security instructions, and those SSI's told us on that post what we were to be focused on and what we were to do and things like that. So if somebody came up and started punching us in the chest with their finger or whatever, I mean, whatever, just started cursing at us, because they would do that on occasion, we had authority, we had these SSI's, "No, I'm just doing what I'm ordered to do," right? That kind of thing, right? So there's something like an SSI in here for me as a pastor and I want you to see it but I want you to see it in the context of the gospel.

So notice chapter 2, Titus 2:11, we're going to go through verse 11 through chapter 3, verse 5. "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us," you've heard me talk about this before, God's grace trains us to do two things, "to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions," but it also trains us positively, "to live self-controlled," so sober-mindedness, "upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us," here's the gospel, "gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. Declare these things," Paul says to the preacher, "exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you." And then comes chapter 3, "Remind them," so this is a part of what his calling is to be, to do, "Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people." And then Paul says this, "For we ourselves," now this is funny, Paul's talking to a bunch of Gentiles and he throws himself in as a Jew. Even back in my Jewishness, "For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done

by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit."

So notice that the gospel is the heart of everything Paul is saying here, okay? And then so what does Paul tell Titus and by implication therefore every pastor is their SSI, their special security instructions here. In the midst of the gospel, what is he supposed to do? Just start with verse 1. Remind them, right? Remind them to do what? So this is all part of the good works he mentioned back in chapter 2 and he'll mention again later. But yeah, what is he supposed to remind them? Submissive to rulers and authorities. What else? Ready for every good work. All right, to be obedient. Be ready for every good work. Speak no evil or evil of no one. Next? Yeah, to avoid quarreling.

[unintelligible]

No. And then what else? Be gentle. And lastly? Show perfect courtesy. Now I want you to see something. Notice the next word, what's the next word? For. That tells you that verse 1 and 2 are connected to verse 3 and what does verse 3 have to do with verse 1 and 2?

[unintelligible]

Because we were doing the very opposite of verse 1 and 2. That's the way, that's our society. That's our culture. Wherever we're at, very often it's verse 3 is where we live. Think about it for a minute. Just think about it, "once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another." So notice that here's where we're supposed to be, here's where we used to be, but now we can be here, why? Why can we be in verse 1 and 2?

[unintelligible]

Yes, that's right, grace. It's verse 4, "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness," I find that statement funny because he just told us what our works of righteousness were in verse 3, foolishness, disobedience, deceived, led astray, all those things. That was our works of righteousness. So we're not saved by those, right? Not because of works of righteousness done by us "but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit."

[unintelligible]

Guilt, grace and gratitude. Excellent. Very good. I stole that from the Heidelberg Catechism. So there you go, guilt, grace and gratitude.

So I just want you to see that there is a way we are supposed to be even if the world around us is this way, verse 3, we're to be this way. But why are we to be this way? So

that we can be better than everybody else? So that we can be more righteous than everybody else? So that we can those things? Why are we to be verse 1 and 2? Huh?

[unintelligible]

We've been saved. It's because of chapter 2, verse 11 through 14 and chapter 3, verses 4 and following, because God rescued us and he gave us a whole new way of being. Woo!

[unintelligible]

Thank you. Heritage Pentecostal Presbyterian Church. There you go.

So and so notice the task, then, is to remind us. Why do we have to be reminded? Because we too easily slide into here. We too easily slide in there because everybody else is going that way. How hard is it to be simply new made people when everybody else around you at work and at Creston, Homeland, and in your neighborhood, and even in your own family is sliding through verse 3? How hard is it, then, to be verse 1 and 2? It's really hard because you have this social, almost a social tsunami, it feels like, going into verse 3, right? And so we have to be reminded and it's not reminded once, it's something that we have to do over and over again.

So this class is very much about verse 1 and 2, reminding us because there is a different way to be and to deal with media and to look at those things and to respond to them, okay? So that's Titus 2:11 through chapter 3, verse 5. Any questions before we move on? Yes, John?

[unintelligible]

Yes. And worldly passion.

[unintelligible]

Well, that verse 15 is for the pastor specifically. There is, I mean, so you've got to understand it's not a blanket submission, right, because we have too many other passages that say unless we're being commanded to disobey God or we're being forbidden to obey God, right? So it's not a blanket submission, you're right, okay? And the same with some of these others but it's interesting that if you look at what Paul tells Timothy in 1 & 2 Timothy about how to deal with people who are heretics, he doesn't say rant and rave and spread everywhere in public media or billboards or anything how rotten and how evil they are. He says to Timothy in 1 & 2 Timothy, he says go to them gently, right, because God might perhaps grant them repentance. And he says, he even says and deal with, suffer the evil done to you patiently, right? So there is a, we have to be very very careful about how righteous we are and that in our righteousness we can flame up and blow up and start deriding people. We have to be very very patient and calm and making sure that we're not violating scripture that's very clear. Yes?

[unintelligible]

You can do that by voting. You can do that by letter writing. It's where we're at. What else are you going to do?

[unintelligible]

Why do you use it? Because we think of because we're going back to Genesis 3, the serpent was wise, he misused, he unfortunately misused his wisdom but there is a sense of wisdom there.

[unintelligible]

Sure. Sure, absolutely. I'm not denying any of that, okay? It's just our normal response is the way we deal with media and so forth. There's a way, as best as we can as private individuals and so forth, that we can correct that, okay? And we're supposed to... I stood out in front of an abortion clinic for 10 years every Friday. I did my part, right? And we had several politicians who were all very very pro-abortion during that time period. I did my part but I didn't rant and rave. I went out and did what I was supposed to do. I didn't shout at the girls going in and I had to actually calm down my fellow protesters because they were shouting at them and I said, "You realize nobody's listening to you." Right?

So there are things to do, don't get me wrong, it's just that we need to be, we do need to be wise as serpents. We need to be wise about how we do it. Scripture tells us how to be wise about it, okay? When the rest of the world around us seems to be going crazy, we have to be very very sensible, okay? And that's where I'm going with all of this when it comes to media. Anybody else?

All right, so here we go. All right, we need to learn to distinguish between fact and opinion. We do okay with it but sometimes we don't and I've had people come up to me and say, "Did you read this? Look at all the facts." And there's not a fact in it. There's almost all assertions, opinions but not facts and articles and magazines and so forth. We have to learn to distinguish between fact and opinion. There's far more we could do on this, this could be a whole class going through this, but this is just a couple of examples and so I'm going to ask Dave if you would turn the lights out.

It didn't do it. Okay, here we go. We got it. That's not it. Where is it? No, don't turn the lights on.

[video]

Woman: Separating fact from opinion can be difficult. In this video, we will discuss the difference between fact...

["You've still got this up here. You need to actually put this up on the..."]

And how do I do that?

[unintelligible]

No, no, no, no, I don't want to end the slide show.

["There we go. Now it will show up."]

Woman. ...and offer some helpful tips for [unintelligible]

No, I didn't.

Woman: A fact is a statement that can be proven to be true by the use of evidence. Factual statements are true in all cases and for all people; in other words, facts are universal.

Some examples include:

- Dogs are mammals.
- Albany is the capital of New York.
- Mount Everest is the tallest mountain on Earth.

Each of these statements is true. Furthermore, each statement is verifiable and not debatable, provided that definitions are agreed upon. Put simply, evidence exists that could potentially prove or disprove each claim.

Opinions, unlike facts, are neither true nor false. An opinion can express a belief, attitude, value, judgment, or feeling.

Some examples include:

- Dogs are the best mammals in existence.
- Albany is the most interesting city in New York.
- World War II was a terrible war.

Each of these statements expresses an opinion. Note that each is debatable. In other words, one can potentially agree or disagree with (debate) a statement of opinion.

Note that the final statement—"World War II was a terrible war"—strikes many of us as factual. However, this is a statement of opinion. Yes, most people would consider World War II terrible. However, there is always the possibility that somebody out there holds a different opinion, as strange as they may seem. It is very rare for a statement with a value word like "terrible" to be factual.

Now that we know the differences between a fact and an opinion, it's important to know how to distinguish between them when reading literature. Let's look at some helpful strategies:

1. Watch for opinion masked as fact: A lot of times professional or technical language can seem factual. In particular, you'll want to watch out for predictions. Predictions are opinions since they cannot be verified in the present. This is even true if the prediction is being expressed by an expert with an informed opinion. A zoologist who predicts that a particular animal will go extinct in 50 years, for example, is stating an informed opinion. This opinion is based on evidence, research, and expertise, but because it cannot be presently confirmed, it is not a fact.

2. Value or Judgment words often signal an opinion: "LeBron James is very tall" is a statement most people would agree with. However, the word "very" makes this problematic. What exactly does it mean to be "very tall"? It is not defined. What one person considers very tall, another may consider average or even short. The word "very" is an example of a value or judgment word. Here is a list of value and judgment words; if you see one of these in a statement, then the view being expressed is likely an opinion.

3. Look for words like "should" or "ought to": These words usually suggest a course of action or give advice. Though this advice may be advisable, it is rarely factual. No matter how much we agree with a "should" statement, it is by its very nature opinion. For instance, "One should avoid smoking cigarettes," may be...

Uh-oh. If technology can fail you, it will. I just want you to know. And that's a fact. Okay, well, it should be doing fine. I've got connections. Is everybody looking at their phones? Oh, there we go. It's Wes's fault.

...may be sound advice with a lot of supporting evidence, but it is still an opinion. "Smoking cigarettes can cause a variety of health ailments," on the other hand, can be verified and is therefore factual.

In essence, facts can be verified by evidence, and opinions are statements of belief, attitude, value, judgment, or feeling.

Before we go, let's look at a quick review question:

Which of the following statements is factual?

1. Ohio is a beautiful state.
2. You should never drive faster than the speed limit.
3. George Washington was the 1st president of the United States.
4. George Washington was a great public speaker.

The answer is 3. This is the only option that can be backed up by evidence.

Thanks for watching, and happy studying!
[end of video]

All right. Where was I? There we go.

Okay, so thinking about the difference between fact and opinion, what you think about as you're listening to what she had to say, what are some examples where you see that, maybe you're reading something or you're hearing a newscast or a podcast or something, how would something like that be valuable to you? You don't know.

[unintelligible]

Okay, yeah. Okay, right. It's always a possibility, yeah.

[unintelligible]

Sure. Scott was just talking about this morning about prophets in the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 13. Yup, you're right. I mean, there is the possibility of deception. It's always a possibility, right? And how do you find out if you're being deceived, if somebody is being deceptive? You go and you have to validate. You have to go look for the facts. If I tell you that Neil is deceiving you just because he said the grass is blue outside, you have a choice, you either say, "Oh, I believe everything Mike says," or you say, "Ah, I think I need to validate that because it could be something else." Right? And so once validation comes in, then you have facts, you have specifics that you can actually go back to and point to. All right?

[unintelligible]

Yeah, yeah, so, yeah, so what was it again, Scott?

[unintelligible]

Inquire, ponder, investigate. So that's what you do with false prophets. You have to inquire, you have to ponder, and you have to investigate. So there's the validation part.

[unintelligible]

Right, positions are agreed on. Yeah. Right.

[unintelligible]

And that's a very helpful point to remember that there is the need to define the terms. You have to define the terms, okay? Oftentimes we assume in a discussion that everybody means what we mean, okay, and you have to actually, if it's really worthwhile, if it's really a hot situation and you want to be the one who has your head squarely on your

shoulders, not running around with your hair on fire, you have to stop, take a breath and say, "How do you understand that word? What does that mean?" Let them define it and see if you can hang with the definition. If the definition is partly right, you can say, you know, then you can start working with that, okay? Glen?

[unintelligible]

Right. It does. Yeah, it does. It's interesting that she actually doesn't agree with that. By the way, this is a group called Mometrix, something like that Mometrix. It's just preparation for kids, your high school kids taking the standardized tests so she doesn't even have an agenda. It's funny that she doesn't have any other agenda other than that and she would disagree with that postmodernism, right?

And so that's important. By the way, I was talking to Wes about this the other day. I feel like it feels very much like we have all become offspring of postmodernism, okay? The skepticism, the hermeneutics, remember hermeneutical skepticism, right? Hermeneutical suspicion is part of postmodernism. So I suspect everything you say is a power-play and I see people on the right and left, I see Christians and non-Christians doing exactly that, suspicious of everything and then I go look for my truth, the one report I think is true against everybody. We've just slidden into the pool of postmodernism, okay? And that's going on all across the board by people who would denounce postmodernism. We have to be sensible, realize what's going on, step back and start working at how do we validate, okay? And the world can test our validation. If we've got our ducks in a row, the facts in there, then we can lay those out and people like this gal here, I would assume, would probably go, "Oh, yeah, you've got the facts." I think most people would agree if you could give them the specifics, you can give them the facts, okay?

We need to move on. Anybody else? Real quick, anybody else before I move on?

Okay, where am I? This is another video, just college prep kind of video called "Facts Versus Opinions" but this gets into... well, you'll see. So here we go, assuming that technology decides not to mess with us.

[video]

Understanding the news used to be simpler. Newspapers, radio, and TV usually made a clear distinction between objective fact that can be proven, and opinion crafted by their writers and producers. They used terms like editorial, op-ed, and commentary to distinguish opinionated content from more objective reporting.

But over the years, the Internet has helped blur the line between fact and opinion in the media. Now there are virtually limitless sources out there creating content online, and terms like editorial and op-ed have all but faded away. There's also no vetting process or authority that requires anyone to mention if their online content is fact or opinion.

Just to be clear, opinions are not inherently bad things when it comes to reporting the news. They can provide new context or a different perspective. Opinions have also played an influential part in history, such as when news anchor Walter Cronkite shared his personal views on the Vietnam War in 1968. Of course, perspectives like that were typically designated as opinion.

But these days, we seem to have lost some of our ability to detect opinion-based material if it isn't properly labelled. Unfortunately, there are content creators out there who are happy to take advantage of that. They mix opinions in with a few facts to make their perspective more credible. This helps fire up your emotions and keep you engaged with their content.

At this point, you may be thinking that you could tell the difference between fact and opinion. Well, it may be harder than it looks. A Pew research study created five factual statements and five opinion statements, and then asked people to identify which was which. Out of 5,000 adults, only 35% correctly identified all five opinion statements, while only 26% identified all the factual statements.

That means the vast majority either saw facts as opinions, or accepted opinions as fact. Misinterpretations like these could easily lead to confusion and difficulty in discussing the news with others. The study also found that people were more likely to view an opinion as fact if that opinion matched their existing beliefs.

The blur between fact and opinion likely won't get better anytime soon, so it's up to you to spot the difference. For instance, watch out for statements that may seem factual, but are actually opinions that favor a certain perspective. And while you may find terms like editorial every now and then, don't rely on them to help you distinguish fact from opinion. Finally, avoid news sources that care more about stoking your anger and fears over reporting objective news.

Though it may be difficult, recognizing fact and opinion in the media can make a tremendous impact on how you see the world.
[end of video]

So I would disagree with his conclusion. [video continues to play] Shut up. I would disagree with his conclusion when he said that the five, one of the five opinion statements and the five factual statements, that it was 30 something percent could tell what the opinions were and 20 something percent could tell what the facts were, and then he said, what did he say? He said people have a problem defining, it's the way he stated it. It was almost like 70 something percent of the people cannot tell fact from opinion. Actually, it could have been a whole mixture. In fact, I've got the Pew study report. They could get some of those right and not all of those right and do you see what I'm saying? It doesn't

mean that it's just overwhelming, it's everybody can't, nobody can really figure out fact and opinion. I'm going to actually have to disagree with him on that.

But anyway, so as you think about facts and opinions, all right, and the value of it, sometimes you've seen exactly some of the things he was talking about in this particular video where things get put forth as facts, but if you read it and you start looking, you start realizing I'm just getting assertions, all right? I've done that with several of the books that I've reviewed and articles, I'll start looking and they get my emotions up and I'll stop and I'll go back and reread it and go, "Wait a minute, where's the facts? Where's the data? There are broad generalities that are assertions but show me the money, right? Or show me the way it is. Where do you get that from?" And that changes, then, the way you actually hear or read that particular article or things like that.

So anybody, any questions on this one or any input? Yes?

[unintelligible]

Right, right, right, right. Yeah, you remember when Lee was here and was talking about all the reports he had to put out on an FAA crashes, plane crashes for 30 something years and he put them out and dealt with the media and they never got them right because they didn't have that frame of reference. But that's just sloppy reporting.

[unintelligible]

It is. Yeah.

[unintelligible]

Yeah, and that's something to keep in mind. That's what when you're watching news, I mean, that's got to be in your grid, is this, how do you, you know, is that what really happened? Is this sloppy reporting? Is this so forth. Think about malice or incompetency.

[unintelligible]

Right, and that's why you have to suspend judgment because you don't, you don't have... So think about this, here's an example. George Bush sends us into Iraq. All of his Intel reports, has anybody seen any of his Intel reports? No, they're classified. You will not see them. Think about we're just now starting to get classified reports from World War II. We won't see all those until most of, until everybody from World War II is probably dead before those come out. Look at what's classified reports, stuff that you and I will never be privy to. He sent us in, apparently he had enough evidence to know that it was legit to go in but there was nothing there. And then people start pooh-poohing him that this was all just smoke and mirrors. Well, having been in those situations, having been in the military and knowing about Intel reports, I can suspend that judgment and say he's going to have to stand before God and give witness to what he's done. All right, he's going to be

accountable for it but chances are he has Intel reports that we will never see, right? So there's an example of that.

So you're right, there are facts that we don't have and sometimes we won't have facts for years to come and so we have to, there is a sense we have to learn to suspend judgment as often as you would want someone to suspend judgment regarding you. Yes?

[unintelligible]

Right. Well, even in a court case. Yeah, even in a court case it's not this person is guilty, it's guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, wherever that language is. So still that door's open and sometimes that gets reversed later when more facts come out.

So we need to move on. Anybody else? Yes?

[unintelligible]

Yeah, right. Yeah. I loved Paul Harvey.

[unintelligible]

Right, right. Okay, we need to move on. Let me just do an aside here. This is dealing with the same, it's dealing with as we're talking about media but I'm going to show you what our President.

[video]

Man: Newspapers, radio and tv.

I'm going to show you what our Presbytery did this last Presbytery meeting. This was an overture that was sent from a session of a church in our Presbytery. It was sent to my committee. I'm the chairman of the administrative committee. We looked at it. We all, it was unanimous from the administrative committee that this was the right overture to put forward. It's an overture to get the General Assembly to do certain actions, okay? So it went to the floor of Presbytery. It was hotly debated and then it carried the day and it's going to go to General Assembly. We're not the only Presbytery putting this forward but I want you to see how we're actually beginning to pick this up because and what this has to do with social media but this is, I think, extremely important. So I want you to know that it's here, it's out there, because I guarantee if you're listening to podcasts or reading other articles that are quick to make judgment calls, they will say that this was done to do for this motivation or that motivation. I can tell you the motive behind what I'm going to show you was because we see the ninth commandment being broken a ton and we need to know how to process that, what to do with this, how to actually move forward with this, how to actually guide our congregations so that we're not doing those things.

So here's the overture and I'm sorry, John, we got paid by the word, okay? And if you don't know anything about overtures, there's a zillion whereas statements to build the

case, and then it moves from there. So the overtures established an ad interim committee to address the ninth commandment, "Ethics for a Digital Age," and it goes like this,

Whereas, Jesus desires his church to be "sanctified in the truth"; and

Whereas, the ninth commandment forbids bearing false witness against another; and

Whereas, our confessional standards thoroughly outline what is required in the Large Catechism 144, and what is forbidden in the Larger Catechism 145 by the ninth commandment; and

Whereas, the Westminster divines wrote before the age of the internet, social media, and other forms of rapid digital communication; and

Whereas, these forms of communication are increasingly prevalent in our churches; and

Whereas, new forms of communication create new opportunities both to advance the kingdom of God and to violate God's commandments; and

Whereas, there has been growing concern among PCA elders regarding online gossip and slander, especially in the areas of controversy and debate; and

Whereas, pastors, elders, and those they shepherd need wisdom [there you go, Moose] need wisdom to apply God's eternal word to contemporary questions about digital speech and communication:

Therefore, [you're, "Now, finally,] be it resolved that the Presbytery hereby overtures the 48th General Assembly of the PCA to form an Ad-Interim Committee to study and report on:

- 1) How the ninth commandment applies to digital forms of communication (such as blogs, social media, public and private online groups, and other developing technologies).
- 2) Biblical and confessional teaching regarding godly speech, charitable debate, and wisdom in discerning truth from falsehood.
- 3) Pastoral guidance on how to address questions of public concern without unintentionally spreading false or misleading information, or disparaging

the good name
of others.

4) Distinctions between private and public offenses, when private online groups with substantial membership are increasingly common.

5) Practical steps for accountability and discipline; that our members might be edified,
and our officers remain "above reproach."

6) Should the findings of the study committee warrant a changes to our BC, our book of church order, then the study committee will propose such changes for the General Assembly to consider.

And the rest of the overture goes on to simply to say how, who will set it up to be the moderator and how it's going to be funded. So that's just, I didn't put that up here.

So it's interesting that there are, and this is, we're not the only Presbytery doing this, there's at least one, maybe two other Presbyteries putting up forward the same kind of overture because we're all seeing this issue where, I mean, I've had people say, "Well, you mentioned the ninth commandment," and they say, "Well, that doesn't apply to this." No, I think it does, right? Because very often we get on social media, so I'm moving to social media for a moment, but we often get on social media and we think, "This is my private opinion. This is my private statement to my private little posse," while 455,000 other people pick up you're shared post. It's not private. As soon as you put it on social media, it is public. I don't care how secure the group is. I've seen it happen. What you state in a private group gets screen-saved and then spread everywhere else. If you put it on Twitter, it's all over the place. You cannot assume that anything on social media is private. So if it's not private, the ninth commandment has a lot to say, not just the ninth commandment but you look at the confessions and the catechisms on ninth commandment, for example, and it has a lot to say to us. So that's the idea behind this study committee or the overture study, study committee.

Anybody have any questions about that before we move on? I'm going to pass these out. Anybody have any questions or anything? Yes?

[unintelligible]

Of what?

[unintelligible]

Oh, so some of the guys that were – here you go – some of the folks that were against the overture said we've already got the Larger Catechism, the Shorter Catechism, we've already got the Bible, we've already got those things in place, why do we need a study committee which is why don't we just deal with this here like we're supposed to? And all that was valid, you're right, absolutely, so we didn't disagree, the issues is that every

one...so our denomination has all kinds of study papers because new things come up and so how does this apply in that situation. So we've got study papers from the study committees like this is going to be asking for on abortion, on marriage, divorce and remarriage, on Freemasonry, on a host of things that we felt, you know, you would think would be very very clear in scripture and so we did these study committees to make it even more distinct so we would have, we would know. You have to understand, a study committee's report is not binding on anyone, it's just counsel. What would be binding on the officers of the church if any of those conclusions in the study committee end up moving into proposed changes into our book of church order, but even then it's not an open and shut case because it takes once it gets, once a motion is made to amend the book of church order, it then has to come back to the Presbyteries and then the Presbyteries have to vote on it through the year and you have to have, like, $\frac{3}{4}$ of our Presbyteries have to agree to the change, and then it goes back to General Assembly. So it's almost a three year process but it gives us a chance to go slow and make sure there's no hobbyhorses being ridden and we get to work through those which is really wonderful. It actually gives us a chance to discuss more fully how these things work out. So there's a longer answer than you asked, sorry.

Anybody else? I have a recommendation. Yeah?

[unintelligible]

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. I used to get kicked off – you'll love this, Moose – I used to get kicked off of jury duty all the time because during the jury system, they would say, they would ask the question, "Do you assume that a police officer's testimony is valid?" And I said, "Yes." Well, you can't do that. I had a federal judge who was a Republican tell me I couldn't do that. I had the county judge, I had the state judge in three different cases say you can't do that and I'm going, "Why?" I mean, it's true until it's proven otherwise. It's kind of like innocent until proven guilty, right? I mean, that's just my automatic working assumption because of the fifth commandment. That's a great, good point.

So before we move on or close, you have a book review I just did on this book. I highly recommend the book. I actually had some beef with it and that's in the book review, you can see it, but it's "Posting Peace." He's talking about engaging, how do we as Christians engage in social media, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, knock, knock, no, TikTok, sorry, not knock, knock, or whatever else. I highly recommend it. He's not Presbyterian, he's not Reformed but he does a really really good job and he's got a lot of research that he pulls in. At first I was a little skeptical because the very first chapter is a lot of assertions, pay attention to those things, and then after a while you start seeing all this data and I actually got alerted from his book to some of the studies that I pulled up for you, okay? I went back and actually followed them up myself and most of those were really really good. So I highly recommend the book. You've got my book review and I would encourage you to pick it up and read it.

Anybody else before we close? I'm going to wrap up here. Yes? And an announcement.

All right, so taking the whole class together just real quick. What did you find the most helpful? I'm not going to ask what you found least helpful, okay? I don't want to... My fragile ego would just shatter. What did you find most helpful as you went through the class?

[unintelligible]

Gentle, okay. What else?

[unintelligible]

Be careful.

[unintelligible]

Yeah, yeah, good, thank you.

[unintelligible]

Okay, heightened awareness. Good. Anybody else?

[unintelligible]

Don't jump to conclusions. Okay, yes?

[unintelligible]

Yeah, yeah, awesome. Okay.

So were there any personal actions you changed as a result of the class? I know we've been doing it for five weeks but was there any, were there any personal actions you changed as a result of the class?

[unintelligible]

Okay, good, validate.

[unintelligible]

Oh yeah, the way you talked to your daughter about the things that she's read. Good. What else? Any other changes? Yes?

[unintelligible]

Sgt Schultz. Yes, he's my patron saint, "I see notion. I know nothing." He is my, I'm going to tell you, I'm going to find somebody who writes icons and do me a Sgt Schultz

icon to stick in my office. He is my patron saint. Very good. Anybody else on personal actions, change maybe during as a result of the class?

[unintelligible]

Slow down? Very good. That would apply to knock out most of the arguments on Facebook or social media if we just slowed down and took a breath, yeah. Good.

All right, so give some examples of ways you processed the news, the videos, podcasts differently the last four weeks. So are there any ways that you processed what you've seen or read differently?

[unintelligible]

Yeah, yeah, the headlines. So checking out the headlines. That's great. I always love to do that. That's fun.

Let me tell you a story real quick. So I used to do this with our kids, so if you have kids when they get to this age, you can start doing things like this but we were driving on the road, so you all remember billboards were a big thing in Jackson, Mississippi still because there was no social media at the time really, and so I would always question my kids, my girls, these are the girls, I would always question them about what is that billboard trying to sell? And the most memorable moment was this really gorgeous babe of a woman smoking Virginia Slims, right? I mean, she was a knock-out. That's what they did. I'm sure it was airbrushed, whatever they did at the time. But she's smoking Virginia Slims so I asked my oldest daughter, I said, she was 11 at the point, I said, "What are they trying to do in the ad?" "Well, they're trying to say if I smoke Virginia Slims I'll be gorgeous." Bingo! That ad has never had any power over her, right? I mean, it's a lame ad anyway. But that's a fun thing to do with your kids is actually say, "What are they trying to do in this headline?" When they get to that age where it really matters, something that can be helpful actually getting them to start engaging in those things. Very good.

Anybody else, different ways that you processed news, video and podcasts in the last four weeks?

[unintelligible]

Source documents. Yeah, John brought that up at almost the first class. Yes, excellent.

[unintelligible]

Yeah, yeah. Right. Right. Yes. And sometimes you just need to read what they're saying validates them. You just need to read. So I remember when the National Organization of Woman used to put out that all the surveys, this is 1993, all the surveys showed that men are bad for women, right? So husbands and significant others terrorize their wives, they're

abusive, but when you went and looked at the report, what was funny was that the monogamous marriage of the first time, the first time marriage in the survey, in the study, the number of in the first time marriage the number of abuse cases was far lower. I mean, phenomenally lower, like almost didn't exist. Not just physical abuse but sexual abuse of the kids was almost, I mean, it was like this. It was the second marriage and it was the walk-in boyfriend, it was the live-in boyfriend, the common law husband, that's where the numbers went ginormous. But NOW lumped all these together in this one statement, so just going to read their source, the source they were using, was eye-opening. It actually didn't prove what they were trying to assert. So that's a good example.

All right, anybody else? Okay, so remember Hanlon's razor, this will make David happy, okay? Never ascribe to malice that which is adequately explained as incompetence. Then suspend judgment. Assume innocence. Accusation does not mean guilt. We've already said Hanlon's razor. Reporters are human. Are there other reasonable, that's what you were talking about, John, are there other reasonable explanations. That's why you look at those other documents. Good. What's the media angle? And push the button, come one, oh, here we go. Don't be part of over reporting. So remember validate before you palpitate and authenticate before you propagate.

That is the end of the class. This is the end of Sunday school adult class for a summer break as well as the kid's class. I sent out the letter Thursday. It's just a break so that Suzy and Ginger can get the classes together and it'll give me a chance to actually deal with new members' class. We have some people that need to come to a new members' class and be able to do that during the Sunday school time. So don't let that time run away with you. Maybe spend more time praying, reading scripture primarily, right? And use that time valuably, okay?

All right, let's pray.

Lord, thank you so much that you are a God of wisdom and discernment. Thank you, Lord, that you know us. There is no deceiving you. There is no deep fakes before you. There is no twisting before you. There is no lying really before you because you know the truth. And Lord, that means you know our own hearts and so we pray, Lord, that you would have mercy upon us, that you would continue growing us in the grace that has appeared bringing salvation to all people, that we would renounce ungodliness and worldly lusts, that we would live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age, that we would look for the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ who gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from all lawlessness, liberate us from all lawlessness and purify for himself his own special people zealous for good works. Lord, now as we get ready to enter into the great assembly, we pray that you would fill us with your Spirit, that we would rejoice and worship you as you deserve, as you are worthy of. In Jesus' name. Amen.