

Ask Jeff

Ask Jeff

By Dr. Jeff Meyers

sermonaudio.com

Preached On: Thursday, May 25, 2023

Crossroads Ministries

301 S. 8th Street

Opelika, Alabama 36801

Website: www.fbcopelika.com

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers

Good evening. It is 6:30 Central Standard Time, which means it is time for some Wednesday night Bible study, unless those that are listening on 97.7 FM, it's technically on Sunday morning, but everybody can participate because for those of you that may be new tonight in person or watching online or listening on the radio, our midweek Bible study here at First Baptist Church of Opelika is completely driven by you. That's right, you have the opportunity to decide what text we talk about, question we answer, issue that we discuss.

So let me real quickly just share kind of a quick distinction. For those that do not know, we actually have a daily Ask Jeff YouTube channel where we answer a question each and every day Monday through Friday, albeit only for about two or three minutes. Now let me share with you the way to participate in that versus what we're going to do tonight. If you want your question on the daily, you go through the website, either fbcopelika.com/askjeff or you can go to askjeff.net. Basically if you go through our website, you get the daily YouTube channel. If you go through our text messaging system, which is area code 334-231-2313, then that's how you participate live on Wednesday nights, or for those of you that are here in person, you raise your hand.

So how does this go forth? Whether you text or whether you raise your hand tonight, you get to decide again what we talk about. So now oftentimes people get a little frustrated. I understand why we end up chasing rabbits because we, you know, dig a little deeper, go tangent too, we have follow-up questions, whatever it may be. People say, "Well, I wish my question had come up." Let me share with you this. You can submit your question more than once. Okay. And you can submit it both to the daily and to the weekly and they will not conflict or cancel out one another. So just to let you know, um, on Wednesday nights, we typically go a little more in depth than we would on a daily question, just because we're able to interact and dialogue with each other. So that's kind of how tonight rolls, whether you're in person with your own line, let's have some fun. Let's do some "Bible study."

So question number one says, what family devotional would you recommend? Hmm. That's actually a really good question. By the way, I, when my kids obviously were much younger in life, we did a pretty regular family devotional in the evenings together as a family. Now let me address this from, I guess, two streams of thought. Number one, if

you so choose to use some type of devotional material that is extraneous to scripture, which in other words, it's a devotional book, devotional material, some type of Bible study, so to speak, let me recommend you to thoroughly vet, not only who wrote it, but the perspective that they're coming from. Okay. Read, I know this may sound strange, but if I'm at a bookstore or I'm ordering something online, the first part of a book I read is the bottom of the back cover. You say, why is that? Because I want to know who is the person who authored this, what is their background, what are the lenses by which they're going to be communicating to me through. Okay.

Now allow me to share with you my personal preference and I'm a little tainted here because when I was 18 years of age, I had the privilege of going through a Bible study. I'm sure many of y'all are familiar with it. It's called Master Life. Okay. It changed my life in a whole lot of different ways in different directions but one of the things that Master Life teaches is one of the things that our family implemented throughout our years of not only raising kids when they're little, but obviously throughout the course of time. Now, for those of you who took it, let me remind you, those of you did not let me instruct you kind of the guidance that Master Life gives on this area is it suggests, and by the way, I highly recommend this, it suggests that anytime that we're in any type of Bible instruction environment, Sunday school, a sermon, an interactive Bible study, whatever it may be, that you take some type of notes. Okay. Now I know not everybody's one who likes to write it down or type it in, but there's some type of taking the information or taking the data that was given and make it to where you could recall it later. And one thing that Master Life taught me was to take copious notes anytime I'm in a Bible study, anytime I'm listening to a sermon, whatever it may be, and then throughout the course of the week, this is where I'm going to answer the question, revisit those notes so that it begins to soak in from a repetitive strategic manner.

So how does that play out? One of the things that oftentimes that my family would do when we would go through this, particularly when the boys were young is by the way, this, I'm going to give you just kind of the Myers metric. We did not do family devotionals on Sundays or Wednesdays. We figured the boys that had enough church, okay, that day. But the other days of the week we did. And typically what we would do on Monday and Tuesday is we would reflect back on what they and we had learned on Sunday. Now, one of the beautiful things about being at First Baptist Church of Opelika is that if you have small children here on Sunday, Paul Dunbar and I teach the exact same text. Now, you know, he kind of puts it more on the kid level, so to speak, but we're walking through the same respective texts. And then on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, if necessary, we'd go back and still continue what was Sunday or what they learned on Wednesday.

So obviously the kids aren't doing Ask Paul over there because that would frighten everybody but nonetheless, let me advocate that I'm not against extra biblical devotionals that are out there. I think we need to be cautious and discerning about who's writing them and the perspective they come from. But I would implore you if this is a subject matter you're interested in person, I would implore you to try to establish a habit, whether it's here at First Baptist, the teaching and preaching here, or whether it's a podcast you listen

to, whatever it may be, to take those biblical studies and to then explore them throughout the week so that it becomes something that saturates your life and it's not just a 25 minute or 30 minute here, it actually sticks for a lack of better terms.

So I confess I'm kind of tainted thanks to Master Life of taking that which God gives me in a certain time, location and date, and then soaking on it throughout the week. Hopefully that helps. I know I didn't endorse a particular product and/or author and such. Just be discerning, be careful and allow me to give you this disclaimer. If you personally are interested in a family devotional or you're interested in a particular book, commentary, whatever it is, and you go, "I just I don't know if I can trust it," email me. Email me and say, "Hey, would you do this in your home? Is this something you would advocate? Is this something? What are the warning signs here?" And I promise I will interact with you and we can take care of it.

Any follow up on family devotionals? We're good. There's a follow up on the screen. It says, is a concordance helpful or harmful for someone who is new to studying the Bible? Let me answer that question. A concordance is helpful whether you're new or you're old to studying the Bible. You say, "What is a concordance?" Well, not every Bible has one. My study Bible does. A concordance is what you find at the end of your Bible where it lists a word and then shows you the verses in the Bible where that word can be found. Now, if you have a study Bible, much like I do, your concordance will not be exhaustive. OK, however, and by the way, it is available online. I actually possess the app for what I'm about to share with you. There is a legendary concordance known as Strong's Concordance. There's also one called Cruden's Concordance, and there's a few others that are out there. A concordance is a beautiful tool to have because one of the things it allows you to do is when you're studying scripture, there's a certain word, there's a certain place, there's a certain name, a certain concept, it allows you to what we call it is called a chain reference; it allows you to look back at when that word was used in previous texts and to look forward in other texts and to find it isn't used in any other places. I'm a huge fan of concordances because sometimes you're studying scripture, you're doing Bible study, and you know of a name, you know of a place, you know of a specific word, but you can't recall the verse. Well, then you can go back and find that word and go through that concordance and eventually find the verse. I think it's an incredible helpful tool whether you're new, whether you're old to the faith. I can't speak highly enough of concordances because they help us connect words and concepts to other scriptures other than just the one that we're studying.

By the way, here's the beautiful thing about a concordance: there's no commentary. In other words, you say, "Well, what if it's a concordance that was put together by somebody who's of this denomination?" It won't matter because denomination or theological preferences have nothing to do with a concordance because all it does is tell you where that word is found and what verses it's found in. It's just a simple, simple research tool. Most study Bibles, I know many of you have one probably in your possession, will have some type of concordance at the back, but they're always very limited. They are not exhaustive. Strong's Concordance traditionally is the most exhaustive one, and because of the age, all the copyrights and stuff expired, and so it's

public domain. There's even an app. I have it on my phone, and you can search by specific book of the Bible, etc. It's just a great, great, great tool.

So any concordance issues? We're good there? Everybody's got their Bible study ready, right? We're ready to go. Yes, ma'am?

[unintelligible]

Yes, so okay, the question was I did recommend a specific concordance known as Strong's. Why that one over others? There is a concordance out there called Young's Concordance. Young's is a really good one, but it doesn't have every single time that word's ever used. In the Strong's concordance, it takes every verse that a word is ever used in with the exception of the word "a, an," and "and." I mean, can you imagine if we had every verse with the word "and" in it? Okay, it would be, you know, 100 pages just of those verses, right? And so, for example, I'm just going to pick a random word. Okay, you ready? Here we go. You asked the question, so here we go. The word corn. Don't laugh, it's in the Bible, right? Did you know that according to my concordance, the word corn was first used in Genesis 42:2? It's used in Deuteronomy 25, Judges 15, Job 5, Psalm 4. I can bore you. We can do a whole Bible study, not just on corn, all right? Now, the reason I use that is, ma'am, in my concordance here, it lists about 12 verses, okay? And by the way, corn was a very valuable item, particularly in the Old Testament sacrifices, okay? That's why it's critical there. But in Strong's concordance, and obviously I don't have it on me right now, I guarantee there's probably more than 12 references to it, and so this study Bible has chosen strategic places where that word is used, it's not an exhaustive list. That's why it's called Strong's Exhaustive Concordance. I don't know, y'all can look at it. There might be 300 verses with the word corn in it. It will list every single one of them. Strong's concordance is actually longer than the Bible. You say, "How can it be longer than the Bible?" Because it lists the reference for every word of that verse all throughout wherever that verse is found. And so, it's a really big old book, or if you go to the online edition, it's an app on your phone.

So, that's the difference. So, Strong's is exhaustive. Cruden's and Young's tends to be a little bit less exhaustive and then they just vary from there. But I mean, again, it goes back to, I hate to overuse the word exhaustive, but you literally look up a word and sometimes you can get lost in it because you're thinking of a strategic verse that is pretty well known that uses that word, and you didn't realize there were 200 verses that use that word, and then you got to go through all of them and kind of figure out where you are. Does that make sense? So, but that is a really good question.

Any other concordance? We're good there. Moving on. What is the difference in a pastor/preacher and a prophet? Oh, this could be fun. Okay. Let's go to Ephesians 4. As we turn to Ephesians 4, then we're going to go to Romans 10 and 1 Timothy 2. Okay. I have to say that for my sake so I don't forget.

In Ephesians 4, I want to distinguish tonight the difference between an office and a function. Okay. Now I'm going to make that specific in just a moment, but in Ephesians

4:11, it gives us what we might call the five offices of the church. It says, "And he gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." Now, did you notice that in that verse, it did not mention preachers. Okay. Now keep a hand or a piece of paper in Ephesians 4 and go to Romans 10. I'm going to show you an interesting designation here and I promise we're going back to the whole prophet thing. Romans 10, I believe it's verse 14. Yes. Verse 14. Actually, let me go back to verse 13, because I quote it every Sunday morning. It says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him whom they've not believed? How shall they believe in him in whom they've not heard? How shall they hear without a preacher?" Someone who, by the way, the word preach means to proclaim truth. Okay. Notice it did not say you have to have a pastor. You need a preacher. Okay. Now a mom can be a preacher. A dad can be a preacher. A sibling can be a preacher. A friend can be a preacher. A coach can be a preacher. A preacher by designation is somebody who just proclaims truth in whatever subject matter you're dealing with. Well, in the context here, it's a preacher, someone who knows what it means and how one can be saved and they tell somebody else, all right?

Now go over to 1 Timothy 2 and I want you to see how the Apostle Paul makes a very important distinction between a preacher and these offices, then we're going to go back to Romans 10. Okay. 1 Timothy 2 and by the way, I realized it's verse 7, I'm going to read the previous six verses because I think we can never read these verses enough. It says, "I exhort you therefore that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings, for all that are in authority that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Savior, who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth, there is one God, one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time." Verse 7, "whereunto I am ordained a preacher and an apostle. I speak the truth in Christ. I lie not, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity." Now what's interesting about that passage is the Apostle Paul makes it clear that his role as an apostle is distinguishable from, but includes his role as a preacher. You can be a preacher and not be an apostle, but if you're an apostle, you're going to be a preacher. Okay.

So now go back to Ephesians 4. Here's where we get to have fun tonight, or at least I'm going to, you're welcome to go along for the ride. Ephesians 4. Let's talk about these respective offices that we know were given to the church. Okay. Now the church from an outward perspective was initiated in what we know as Acts 2 at Pentecost. Okay. It says, "and he gave some to be apostles." I think we talked about this last week, if memory serves me correctly, that back in Acts 1, when they were replacing Judas with Matthias, they had to talk about how is one qualified to be an apostle. It said that they knew about, they observed, they witnessed the entirety of Jesus' ministry. Okay. Which means that I would argue biblically that today in the 21st century, there are no true biblical apostles. Okay.

Now, second question or second office, he gave some to be prophets. Now there are a whole lot of people out there that want to claim that they're a prophet. Here's the problem,

in Deuteronomy 18 it says that if a prophet makes a prophecy and it does not come true, that he should be stoned to death. Isn't it interesting that those who want to claim to be a prophet never pass out stones just in case they're wrong. Okay. In fact, some of you may have heard this before, but years ago I was watching late night "Christian television," some of you watch the comedy channel, I watch Christian TV. And there was an individual who claimed to be a prophet and on the bottom of the screen, it literally said over 85% of his prophecies have come true. He's not a prophet. Okay. A prophet, one who speaks on behalf of God, never misses. Okay.

Now keep your finger there. Go to Hebrews 11 for just a moment. By the way, if you are new to us, this is a Bible study, not a Baptist study so we're going to use the Bible to answer some of these questions. Hebrews 11, I'm sorry, chapter 1, I apologize. Chapter 1, the very beginning verse of the book of Hebrews says, "God, who at sundry times in diverse or different manners spoke," listen to this, "in time past unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son whom he's appointed heir of all things by whom also he made the world." So back to Ephesians 4:10, I think we could say that apostles were given unto the church. It was a temporary transitional office that no longer exists today. That prophets were given unto the church, but again, a temporal transition office that is no longer applicable for today.

Here's an interesting one evangelist. There are some people that would limit that to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, that they are the ones who gave us the gospel story. I actually have a friend of mine who wrote his PhD dissertation on defending the fact that the office of the evangelist still continues even to the 21st century. I would find no biblical evidence for saying that it did not. There's nowhere in the Bible where someone called of God to proclaim the truth of God is told not to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. So I could advocate evangelist would be continuing.

And then the next one, a pastor or a shepherd, which we see all throughout scripture and teachers. Okay. Which obviously we have multiple ones, even in this room currently as we speak. Now here's, what's important. Remember the office versus the function. I made a big deal about prophets, but in 1 Corinthians 12, it says one of the spiritual gifts is the gift of prophecy. Just because you have the function of doesn't mean you possess the office of, and so therefore, when we answer this question, I would say that anybody who has a relationship with Jesus Christ is called to preach that gospel, anybody who has the "office" of any church function would be a preacher by necessity, but at the same time, a prophet is no longer an office but it is a spiritual gift.

Now, by the way, for those of you say, "Well, what do I look for in a 'spiritual gift of prophecy'?" The prophets had two functions and the primary function was not to tell you what's coming in the future. You know what the primary function was? To tell you the truth. We need the spiritual gift of prophecy today. We need people who are willing to say, "It doesn't matter how you feel. It doesn't matter what you think, this is what is true." And God has gifted some of you, God has gifted some of the body with that specific spiritual gift.

So you can still have aspects of prophecy without the office of prophecy. You can still have aspects of these different things, but I would think that a preacher is a designation of one who proclaims the gospel, whether they possess an office or not. Is that clear as mud? Can I help it out just a little bit?

Any points of clarity, eliminate some confusion? We didn't serve you dinner, so everybody's going to be quiet tonight. I get it. It's okay. Don't worry about it. No offense taken. We're good. Yep. Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Correct. Those of you who could not hear, I'm advocating biblically there are people with a gift of prophecy, it's listed in the Bible, meaning to, oh, by the way, to proclaim truth, but there are also people who have an ability to kind of say they know what's coming down the road? Now to tell you, I can see what's coming down the road is different than telling you the prophets, you know, a hundred years from now in this place, at this location, this event is going to, a spiritual gift, the leading of the Holy Spirit of knowing what's coming, if that makes any sense. The office of a prophet is one who speaks literally on behalf of the Lord to the people of the Lord about what's coming from the Lord. I think biblically per Hebrews 1:1 there's no longer an office of, but as a part of the body of Christ, think about those spiritual gifts. Okay. You know, when you look at what those spiritual gifts are, that spiritual gift of prophecy, it not only keeps us subjected to truth, make sure that we keep, you know, what is accurate, accurate, but because a person who the spiritual gift moves in that way, knowing what is coming brings balance to the other gifts, if that makes sense.

By the way, you look at that passage in 1 Corinthians, 12 about spiritual gifts, a couple of things to share with you. 1. Every one of you as a believer in Jesus Christ has at least one of them. All right. None of you has all of them. You cannot have all of them. You say, "Why can't I have all of them?" Because one of the gifts of speaking in tongues and one is interpreting tongues and according to 1 Corinthians 12, one keeps the other in check. So you can't keep yourself in check. Okay. So you can't have all of them. You have at least one of them. And ma'am, I would defend that because it says that the Spirit gives as the Spirit desires, he leads as he so chooses, that the Lord has the right to change your giftedness and to maneuver it throughout time because at the very end of that chapter, 1 Corinthians 12, it says, seek earnestly the best gifts. Now I take that to say that you seek earnestly the Lord to be what God has wired us to be versus what I want to be, if that makes sense.

Does that help a little bit with the office of prophecy versus the gift of prophecy? Yeah. Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

The gift of prophecy. That's a different one.

[unintelligible]

Ah, great question. So if I have the spiritual gift of prophecy, then can I give somebody a prophetic statement that is not rooted in scripture? Obviously the Spirit of God never communicates anything contrary to the word of God. We know that. Okay. Here's an issue and you made a statement, I don't know if you were going here, but I'm going to go there. I've known people that have told me I was at a conference, I was at a Bible study, I was at a service, and they had a prophet who spoke a word over me. Okay. The problem with that is when someone says I'm a prophet, then either A) it's going to happen or B) they should die. Isn't that what Deuteronomy 18 says? Okay, again, I'm not trying to be overly dramatic. I'm just trying to be honest with you. I know people whose lives have been ruined because they've gone to a worship service, somebody spoke a word of prophecy over them and it hadn't come true yet. And they're just grieving. Okay. Again, but the spiritual gift of prophecy is going to be rooted in truth, the word of God, of course, right? The spiritual gift of prophecy, as I think we see it in 1 Corinthians 12 is keeping the body centered on scripture, what is true versus what is not. Okay.

Let me give you a good example. This is where the spiritual gift of prophecy not only comes up in the body of Christ, but in a local church. There are times where individuals and people have a tendency to say, "Well, I know what the Bible says but..." Okay. Well, have you ever heard that statement? "I know what the Bible says but..." It is the one who God has gifted with the gift of prophecy that says, "It doesn't matter what your 'but' is, the Bible says..." Speaking truth. Now, sometimes truth is conjectured from biblical passages and there's not necessarily a specific verse about that specific issue, but the principles are laid out in scripture.

And the spiritual gift of prophecy is also indicating what's coming down the road. So for example, look at the office of the prophets. What did they say? Isaiah, "If you don't repent, Babylon's coming." Did Babylon come? Yes. The gift of prophecy is, "Hey, we as a body, we as a church, we as a collective group of believers, if we keep heading this way, this is what's going to happen. If we don't change our ways, this is what is going to happen." And so again, that spiritual gift isn't an office of, but it's the Spirit of God enforcing the scriptures through the body.

Does that help at all? A little bit? Maybe not? Okay. Now I would say, now this is a very transparent evening and as I like to joke, when I'm up here and y'all are down there, I'm bare naked in the winter snow. I'm just up here, right? If you were to ask me my personal spiritual giftedness, not the fact that I'm a pastor, I would definitely say prophecy for two reasons. If y'all haven't noticed, I'm an advocate of truth. Okay. I don't care about the word "but" unless it's in the Bible, in other words, "The Bible says but..." But I will tell you, and I joke about this all the time, I don't have a clue what's happening today, but I can see what's happening five and 10 years down the road. I see trends. I see indicators. I see the things that are happening and God kind of helps me see what's coming. Now, I may not have a clue where I am today, but I can see some things that are coming and I have lost count and if y'all want, I hate to do this, I don't even know if she's in the room, Jennifer Johnson, who is my assistant here at church, she will tell you, she cannot tell

how many times she'll come to me and say, "You know, you said this was going to happen two years ago, or you said this was coming." And she says, "How do you do that?" I say, "I don't know." Okay. But again, you do understand someone with the spiritual gift of prophecy usually lives a very frustrated life. You know why? Because nobody listens to you. You're right. Thank you. Because you say this is coming. "No, that's never going to happen." And then when it does happen, nobody comes back and says, "Man, we should have listened to you." That never happens. Right?

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Ah, the gift of discernment. Can we just go to 1 Corinthians 12? Here we go. We're going to do spiritual gifts tonight. The question is about the gift of discernment. Now I would say the gift of discernment, shall I say the more exhaustive explanation is in 1 John 4:1, it says, "test the spirits to see if they are of God." So discernment is not intuition. Discernment is not, "I've got a feeling." Discernment is, is this of God or is this not of God? That's what discernment would be. Okay. Have you ever met somebody as a believer who, and by the way, it's again, it's a transparent night, I married the gift of discernment. I married the Holy Spirit in a dress. Okay. And there are times, and I don't want any of y'all getting nervous about my wife, but there are times where we will have a conversation with somebody or we're out and about and we leave the conversation and she'll say, "Did something just not settle right with you?" I'm like, "There goes the discernment. There it goes." All right. Now may not have specifics, but there's just a sense that something's not of God or is of God. Okay.

So the gift of discernment keeps the gift of prophecy in check, so when the person who has the gift of prophecy says, "I believe this is what scripture is saying, I believe this is what's coming," the one of discernment says, "Well, I don't know if that's of God or not." See, one of the beautiful things about the spiritual gifts is they don't act independently. These aren't silos. Okay. We're all in the same sandbox playing together. Right. And they operate together, not to over-analyze or to analyze each other, but to work alongside with each other, because notice it doesn't say that everybody has the same gift. If everybody had the gift of prophecy, oh, it'd be a mess. If everyone had the gift of discernment, it'd be a mess. Okay. They all work.

So discernment and the prophet, the one who's exhorted, they all kind of...but discernment is, is it of God, is it not of God? And I would even go drill down a little bit deeper, is it of God, is it not of God, I would also say the gift of discernment is recognizing is the situation of righteousness or of sin, which again of God, not of God. I get it. Okay. But understanding that I can tell you, I know a lot of people, the gift of discernment, not just the one I live with, that oftentimes they know of contrary to God lifestyles, mannerisms, and behaviors that maybe have not been exposed to the rest of the world. They just know something's off and unsettling to them. Have you ever heard somebody say, "I just got to check in my spirit. Something's just not right." Okay. A gift

of discernment may not be able to tell you what it is specifically, but they just know something's not or something is of God.

Does that help at all? Now here's the beautiful thing: all these work together. And so where one seems a little deficient, the other one picks up the ground and they all, that's why it's, it's, this is why there are, and there shouldn't be no Lone Ranger Christians. That's why we need each other as the body. Okay. And by the way, the reason it's used the illustration that we're the body of Christ, I'm going to use a very well-known illustration, just put up with me. You know, we always talk about the body of Christ. There are these very well-known parts, the ears, the mouth, the knees, the arms, whatever it may be. But have you ever tried to walk with a broken toe or no toe? Okay. I have a friend of mine in high school who literally on a tractor accident, lost a toe and it was really difficult to walk. But when's the last time you really thought about how valuable that toe was until it's not there? And that little bitty toe keeps that big old body in check.

Does that help out a little bit in that respect? And so I think the important thing is here, as we talk about a gift of prophecy, a gift of discernment, is seeing them all work in conjunction, not in isolation. And there are, I'm not trying to be overly pointed, there are ministries out there that refer to themselves as discernment ministries. Okay. They oftentimes staff their entire ministry with nothing but people with discernment and it's kind of a depressing crew, just to be honest with you. I'm just being honest with you. But again, that's why we have all of them.

Any more spiritual gifts? Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Oh, the question is a very well-known communicator of the gospel said that in America, a storm is coming. Is that discernment or is that prophecy? It could be both because I think, by the way, I will tell you, we're talking about spiritual gifts here, I think I'm discerning through scripture, I don't think I have the spiritual gift of discernment. Okay. But I don't think it needs a spiritual gift of discernment to realize something's not right. Okay. Can we agree with that one? I would say per the individual that you spoke of specifically, having heard him address biblical matters for many years, I would claim he does have the spiritual gift of prophecy because he oftentimes has said that things are coming if things don't change that do come and then he doesn't get any credit for what he said, though he said it years in advance. That may be one of those both/ands.

Here's a follow up. It says, how do you know what your spiritual gift is? Well, you can go online tonight and you can take a spiritual gift test. I'm not against spiritual gift tests. However, if you have a decent amount of intelligence, you're going to read through the questions and when you read through the questions, you're going to tend to answer what you want the answer to be. Okay. Now let me give you a warning about spiritual gift tests. There are spiritual gifts that are listed in 1 Corinthians 12 and in Romans 14. Most, most, not all, most spiritual gift tests include spiritual gifts that are not in the Bible. There are some spiritual gift tests out there that claim there are over a hundred spiritual gifts.

Okay. Now there's not in the Bible. I'll never forget years ago, for those of you who don't know, for about six, six and a half years of my life, I was a vocational evangelist. I went from church to church, camp to camp, preaching, teaching. My record, just because I want to talk about it, is in one calendar month, I preached 52 times. Okay. That was my personal record. Okay. Now I was always doing those things. Okay. Everywhere I went it was, "Come to Jesus. Come to Jesus. Come to Jesus." I'll never forget, I was in a situation they gave us a spiritual gift test and they told me I did not have the spiritual gift of evangelism. I'm like, because it's not in the Bible. We don't have the giftedness of evangelism, we have the commission of evangelism, right? "Go ye into all the world." Right. You don't, in fact, a dear professor friend of mine years ago wrote an article for a major publication and the title of the article was "Evangelism is not a spiritual gift." Okay. Because if it were a spiritual gift, everybody would claim they didn't have it. Okay. Because evangelism can be a frightening event.

Now the question is how do we know? You can feel free to take those tests if you want to. I don't mind. Let me give you a metric here. Number 1, and I know this is going to sound like Sunday school, so forgive me, pray through it. "God, how'd you wire me?" Okay. Secondly, I would dialogue with mature believers who you trust and ask them some very loaded, could hurt your feelings questions. "How do you see God using me?" One of the things I've learned is typically the gift that you want is not the gift that you have. People think that I like making people mad telling the truth and I really don't. I really don't. Okay. I don't like, this sounds horrible, I don't like telling the truth. I do like telling the truth. Here's what I mean by that. We live in a world today where people do not want to hear the truth and I like people and I want to be friends with everybody. The problem is when you tell the truth to people, they don't want to be your friends anymore. And so it may sound backwards to you, but I'm not really a fan that God gave me the gift of prophecy. I don't like per your question, I don't like kind of knowing that the storm's coming. It can be depressing when you know that here it comes. It's not here now. Everybody's singing Kumbaya thinking great, but there's a tornado right around the road. Okay. Here it comes. By the way, speaking of that in Alabama, you cannot see tornadoes. We got pine trees out here. In Texas, you can see them three counties down the road those things are coming. All right.

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

You can't handle the truth. I got it right. I like that quote. Can we handle the truth? If we're grounded in scripture. One of my favorite, I guess, dialogues I ever had in a Bible study, much like this some years ago, individual that I'm speaking of has since passed away, he was telling me that in his daily Bible, this was kind of in the course of the dialogue, he said, this is basically the paraphrase of the conversation, he said, "I've been reading through the book of Judges." Now, if you don't know about the book of Judges, it talks about what we call the sin cycle. Okay. The Israelites doing great with God, everything's good. They fall into the temptation of sin. They hit rock bottom. They cry out to God. God brings them deliverance. They do good. They do the cycle over and over

and over again. And he made the statement. Okay. He said, "Man, I've been reading through Judges. I've been thinking, man, how hard-headed are these Israelites? And then God showed me I'm an Israelite." Right. In other words, oftentimes when we spend time in scripture, it shows us who we are versus who we desire to be.

Spiritual gifts, walking through the scriptures, praying through the scriptures, bringing people that are wise in your life to confirm or to contradict, and I don't want to go on feelings, but if you figure out your spiritual gift and you get really excited about it, it might not be it. I'm just being honest with you. Okay. Because God equips, the call does not necessarily call the equipped. And I'm just, hey, again, it's just a transparent night. I really like people and I really want to have a lot of relationships and friendships. I thrive on people. And when you spend your life telling people they're wrong, it limits your relationships and your friendships and I don't like that, but that's God's calling.

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

You go for it. Oh, we're not good with freedom. We're not usually good with it. No, sir. You're right.

[unintelligible]

They were. Yep. That's right. You're absolutely. If you couldn't understand or hear him, what he said was one of the things that I think has been proven over time, one of the one aspects that humanity has a consistent struggle with is freedom. The Israelites, they begged and begged and begged and begged for God to deliver them. After 400 years, he delivered them and within 11 days they cried to go back to Egypt. Okay. And I think you and I as humanity, we struggle with that and yet, according to the book of Romans 8 and the book of Galatians 3, the law, can we just say religion, is bondage. And we run to it, do we not? We run to rules. We run to regulations. Relationship, a little tougher because there's freedom in relationship, correct? I like to say this on Tuesday mornings at men's Bible study. As a man, I can say this. There are a lot of times sometimes where I have a dialogue with my wife and I can just tell something's not right. I'm that discerning and I have made this statement, "Baby, what did I do wrong?" Sometimes the response is, "You know what you did wrong." Ladies, on behalf of all men, we do not know what we did wrong. We are that dumb. The second response at times is, "It's not what you did, it's what you didn't do." And you're like, "I was supposed to do something?" Rules and regulations are bondage, freedom, but here's the thing, it's through that relationship that makes it real.

So back to spiritual gifts, pray through them, scripture, stick with scripture. If you take a test, that's fine, but don't fall for something that's not even in the Bible, if that makes any sense. And then bring the rest of the body alongside of you and it should..." Anybody else on that one? We're good.

2 Timothy 2:15, how shall we rightly divide the Bible since there's so many different versions? Okay. I may answer this a little differently than you think I will because obviously if you're here on Wednesday nights, you know, the version of scripture that I read, I study, and I advocate from a lot of different positions. This kind of goes back to the concordance question. I think one of the greatest disservices that you can give yourself – now just put up with me for a moment – is by jumping from version to version to version to version. Okay. Because when you do that, understand you're going to lose those chain references. Okay.

Now, obviously there are versions of scripture out there that I do not utilize in my regular everyday life, however, they typically will translate words a certain way that if you use that version, it will help you connect some ideas and some thoughts. The first thing I want to say is this: whatever version you so feel led to use, use it. Don't bounce around because the more you bounce around, the more confused you're going to be. Okay. However, when we "rightly divide," and I've done this on Wednesday nights before, so hopefully I can do it somewhat quickly night, allow me to do a little bit of version education on what you actually have in your hands. Okay. There are versions of the Bible that are what we call word for word translations. Okay. Sometimes we call them wooden translations, whatever the Greek word is in English, we just translate the English word, even if it's a little difficult to read. Okay. Then we have what we call dynamic equivalent, a dynamic equivalent, by the way, originated on the mission field to communicate the gospel to people who had no biblical background whatsoever. Okay. A dynamic equivalent gives you the idea behind this word, but not necessarily the specifics of the word. Okay.

I'm going to use an illustration that's not in your Bible. Okay. That way nobody can accuse me of going one way or the other. Let's just say, for example, in the book of Acts, we could testify that the apostles drove a specific brand of car. Did y'all know they did? In Acts 1:14, it says they were all in one accord, a Honda, correct? So just pretend for the sake of illustration that in Acts 1, it specifically that that Greek word was Honda Accord. A dynamic equivalent would say a family sedan, which could mean it was a Toyota, a Ford, a Chevrolet, a Kia, a Hyundai could be any of those. Right now I know what you're thinking, "What's the harm?" Well, the harm is when you get over to another passage and it says, well, in Philippi, they drove a Camry, the dynamic equivalent will still say a family sedan. And we can both agree those are two different brands, two different cars, two different engines, etc. And so a dynamic equivalent will give you generalities. It won't give you necessarily specifics. So when you start bouncing around between a specific and a generality, you're going to get a lot of cross confused cross references, if that makes any sense.

So again, even though I would particularly advocate one particular version, please understand this: pick and stick. Does that make sense? Pick and stick. Because if you don't, what you end up doing, and I know you love Jesus and you mean well, you end up picking the one you like with the way that it says it, and so what happens is I like how this version says it in this verse, I like how this version says it in that verse, I like how this version says in that verse, and what you've ended up doing is you've gone what I call

cafeteria shopping. You say, "Cafeteria shopping?" I'll have a meat and three. Y'all know what that means, right? I'm going to pick the ones I like. Okay.

Again, so you have these wooden, dynamic equivalents, and then there are versions out there we call paraphrases. Just think of it as very loose translations, more of a novel than it is a "word for word." And so again, how do you rightly divide? Well, if you don't pick and stick, you can't because you're going to lose the cross references and then in doing so realize that you may have a word for word and you may have a dynamic equivalent. If it's a dynamic equivalent, don't get caught up in the details because you don't have details. And then on the word for word, obviously you could get really in the weeds and some come from these and that and all that. We could dig in that if you want to, but pick and stick is my advice. Maybe we'll make a t-shirt or bumper sticker that says just pick and stick.

But any help on that one by chance? Anybody? Somebody? Nobody? Chris, we have got to start the meals back up, brother. Oh, speaking of coming, how about this question: was Peter known as the first pope in his lifetime or is that a title given to him after the fact? Oh yes, here we go. Speaking of making people unhappy, here we go.

The papacy, by the way, if you were here last week, we talked about apostolic succession. Apostolic succession is the idea that there is a representative of the Lord of Christ, not only originally with one specifically of the apostles, but that has continued throughout time even till today. What we know as the papacy, the idea of a pope, vicar of Christ, etc., is a construct that we all commonly refer to or associate with the Roman Catholic Church. Obviously there is a "pope" that they possess. Now again, I'm not here to berate. I'm not here to be overly negative, but Jesus said, "Call no man father," and the word pope means father. Okay, there you go. Papa, pope, that's what it means.

That being said, what we know as the papacy, there is no place in your Bible whatsoever where Peter ever identified himself as "the vicar of Christ." In fact, in 2 Peter 1:1, he called himself a servant of Christ, not the vicar of Christ. Can we all agree that's a different designation? Being a servant is different than being the head, okay, which is what vicar would mean. That being said, when you look at the papacy as orchestrated, it did not become an official role and/or title till after Constantine in 313 declared Christianity the official religion of Rome. Okay, about 50 to 60 years later, there was a guy by the name of Leo, Pope Leo, who first began to designate himself as not just a religious figure, but the religious figure of Christianity. In other words, "Everything comes through me," okay, and began to create those stratas of leadership that we know today. Then you get to the late 6th, early 7th century, there was a pope by the name of Gregory. Gregory was a pope who first allowed himself to receive the title, okay, and then what you have there is obviously that. Then you get into the 10th century, there was a pope by the name of Sylvester. I have no words for him except corrupt, okay. He was probably the most wicked of them all, okay. Sylvester was known for filling in historical gaps that were not currently known. In other words, if it wasn't there, he just made it up, all right. That being said, we don't really have a "list of popes" until we get to about the 11th century. You say, "Why is that important?" Because who just lived and died?

Sylvester, all right. And when you go back and they list the popes that they believe started with Peter, here's what I find interesting, that in the first 300 years, these supposed popes, none of them are who anybody of orthodox theology considers the fathers of the faith. In other words, those who wrote about the faith and communicated about the faith, the evangelists, the well-known public figures of Christianity, the first three centuries, none of them were popes. In fact, you go back and look at the list and it's a bunch of nobodies that nobody knows anything about. You say, "Well, why is that?" Because they filled in the list is what happened. Okay.

So was he the first pope in his lifetime? No. Biblically speaking, was he the first pope? No. Because biblically speaking, there's not a pope. Biblically speaking. Did I mention I have the gift of prophecy? It is what it is. Okay. Now there is a religious figure known as the pope. Okay. There is an ecclesiastical figure, but there's not a biblical figure. It is not biblically defensible, yet it exists in our world today. And by the way, that's not the only non-biblical issue that exists in our world today, but it is. So again, he never recognized himself. He never allowed himself to be. In fact, when you read the New Testament, there's more attention on Paul than there is Peter. I mean, there is. So if there was apostolic succession, and if there was a pope, it probably would have come from Paul, not Peter. But again, we're dealing with biblical versus non-biblical in those contexts.

Sir, yes, sir. And then how about, man, we haven't had you yet. Go for it.

[unintelligible]

Yes. So, okay. Matthew 16, per the question. For those of you who have not seen what we're about to do, we're about to have a very, hopefully, helpful visual illustration. Matthew 16, beginning in verse 13, is what we call, ma'am, the proof text. You say, "What's the proof text?" This is the only passage they got to claim what they believe. This is the proof text. Okay. I'm going to read it as is, and then show you, hopefully, what it really means. Verse 13, "When Jesus came to the coast of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples saying, whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? They said, some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elijah, others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. He said to them, but whom say you that I am? And Simon Peter answered, he said, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Here's where it gets interesting. "And Jesus answered, and he said unto him, blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Now, again, this is the proof text that Peter was the rock, the pope, the initiator of what we know as the church. Right. However, a basic understanding of language clears it up. Okay. Caesarea Philippi, those of you, I see some of you in the room that were with me in Israel this last couple of months, we acted this out. We had a dramatic presentation right there at Caesarea Philippi. Here we are in an outdoor arena. There's all these false worshiping places behind me. You are part of the audience, just like the apostles were in this story. Okay. Jesus is teaching. He's dialoguing. Notice what he says. He says, "thou, or you, are Peter." Okay. If Peter was the rock, he would have said, "thou art Peter, and upon that rock." What did he say? "Thou art Peter, and upon this

rock I will build my church." In other words, if he had used the word "that" we'd have an issue. He used the word "this." And so he removed the identification from Peter, and he placed it upon himself.

And so, again, even though this is the proof text, it can't be Peter because you would never say, "thou art Peter, or you are Peter, and upon this rock." You'd say, "that rock." Okay? When you're, again, my house, you're doing a little handyman stuff, kids are helping me out, okay? I never say, "Bring me this hammer." What do I say? "Bring me that hammer," right? And then, when you're fiddling around with the tools, you go, "Oh, this is it." You never say, "That is it." This is it, right? It's just basic language. So, when he says, "thou art Peter, and upon this rock," he's making it very clear, "you're Peter, but I'm the rock," speaking of Jesus, of himself. And so, I think the proof text is dismantled by just reading the text.

Now, I had a friend of mine years ago, unfortunately now he is deceased, but let me speak in his behalf. He used to say that the greatest way to understand scripture is to read it like you're in third grade. In other words, we oftentimes get too fancy, we get too creative, we start doing what I call hermeneutic gymnastics, making it say things it doesn't really say. Just read it like it was a third grade book. "You're Peter. This rock." Got it. Pretty simple.

Does that help out a little bit with the proof text?

[unintelligible]

Confession. No, he did confess that Christ was the Lord, absolutely. But, and that's great, but, but, okay, so, can we play a little hypothetical game tonight? Just for the sake of argument, argument, not truth, difference, for the sake of argument, let's just presume that Peter really was designated in a very special designation. He had a higher place than others. He is more special. He is to be the leader. Okay? Turn your Bible over, at least in my Bible, one more page, verse 21, "And from that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go to Jerusalem, he must suffer many things the elders, the chief priests, the scribes, and be killed and be raised the third day. Then Peter took him, he began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, he said unto Peter, Get behind me, Satan!" Oops. "Thou art an offense unto me, for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Isn't that interesting? Within one chapter, this Peter not only says, "Jesus, you're wrong," but Jesus says, "Satan, get behind me." Pretty scathing, is it not? So again, if he really is the rock, don't you think he'd have really understood what was happening? And this is the same one who, by the way, denied three times the night of the Lord. Yes, sir?

["Couldn't you just play on words, Peter? Petros? 'You're wrong. But upon this rock, I'll do it.'"]

Okay, so for those of you who want to get in the weeds a little bit, Petros, or Petra, the name Peter, means a rock, but nothing of huge, massive significance, just like a rock you

would skip across the lake. Okay? A play on words there is, many people have said, because you have to have the thou unto this, okay, I'm going to make you Peter. Peter, you're a little rock, but Jesus, big rock. Nothing wrong with that at all. It is kind of a play on words there. But again, the proof text claims that he is The Rock, which he is not The Rock.

Yes, sir?

[unintelligible]

Yep. So we're going to be in verse 19, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. Whatsoever thou shalt loosen on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Unfortunately, we are down to our last minute. I have no problem overlapping into next week on this, but I do want to give a good food for thought. Okay? In the gospels, we see two phrases, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. Okay? Kingdom of God, God is spirit, according to John 4:24, heaven is material and it is real. Okay? When the Bible speaks of the kingdom of heaven, it speaks of a literal, physical reign of Christ. Okay? And there is biblical evidence that when Jesus does come and reign, guess who will have prominent positions with him? The apostles. So therefore, absolutely in that context, the kingdom of God is spiritual relationship. In other words, Peter may have a prominent role when Jesus returns in reigning, but you don't go through Peter to get to Jesus. Does that make any sense? We can explore that a little more because we're out of time next week, but that kingdom of God and kingdom of heaven, that's a pretty important concept that per a previous question of rightly dividing the word, if you make God and heaven the same thing, you're going to get a problem. So where does it say kingdom of God? Where does it say kingdom of heaven? We'll lead off with that next week. So don't miss. I'm kidding.

All right, let's pray and we'll get out of here.

Lord Jesus, we love you. Thank you that you're the Rock and that we don't have to go to one who is of human flesh and carnality and depravity as we are, no matter how of God they are, but that you are the way, the truth, the life, as we read tonight in 1 Timothy 2, you are the mediator between God and man. Thank you that you've saved us, that you've called us as we talked about tonight, you've gifted us with one or more of the spirit that comes just from you of how you placed us in the body. God, tonight as we depart, may we not only crave your word more, but may we desire to not only be what you've called us to be, but do so according to your word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.