

Friday Night Q&A with Phil Johnson and Mike Riccardi

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Moderator: Thanks everybody for submitting questions this last week, last couple of weeks. I think at first it was a little slow and I was thinking I was going to have to make up a bunch and then this last week, I think I ended up with like 48 questions. Needless to say, there is no possible way knowing Phil and Mike that we'll nearly get through all of those but we're going to try to get through as many as we can.

Speaker: I don't get it. What's he mean?

Moderator: But we had talked this week and I don't know if they're read to commit to anything but those that we don't answer, we're going to try to answer at some other time. We might do another Q&A on a Sunday morning, we may even have them write them out kind of like they did for Strange Fire and post them on the website but we do want to get them all answered because there are really a lot of good questions so thank you very much for doing that.

Tonight the goal is just to get to know Phil and Darlene and Mike and Janna and to answer some of the questions. It was really neat because sometimes you're just asking questions to stump them but a lot of them were very practical, very good and things that I think we'll all really benefit from. So, I've tried to pick out a few, I kind of divided them up into heavier theology questions, more family questions, more just kind of Christian life and things like that. We're going to try to pluck a few of them from each of those sections tonight. But, again, don't feel bad if you don't get your question answered because I had way more than we're going to get through tonight. So, bear with us on that and we will get to them but I think it will be a fun night and some interesting things come out. I know Darlene was really excited about tonight. This is totally...

Speaker: She's been dreading it. She threatened to get sick...

Moderator: She loves this stuff. She was calling me every day, anxiously waiting, counting down the hours...or maybe not, so. Anyway, so, why don't we jump into them and we'll start with a few softballs, some easy ones and really just some to get to know these guys a little bit better too.

I thought this first question, this one is going to go to Phil, and I thought this was great because somebody just had emailed me and said their question was to Phil, "What do you do at Grace To You?"

Speaker: That's probably a Grace To You employee.

Moderator: Somebody actually asked me today if that was mine and I said, "They're totally anonymous so I don't know, I can't divulge who did that," but, Phil, why don't you just tell everybody because everybody knows.

Phil: My title is Executive Director so that means I tell everybody else what to do. Actually, I do have the great privilege of overseeing a management team of about eight guys, the newest of which has been there for more than a decade so we have a very stable staff, everybody knows what they're doing and none of these guys want the other guy's job so it's really a good situation and the ministry does run very well without me. If I dropped dead tomorrow, I don't think there'd be any difference at Grace To You.

Moderator: Yes there would be. Oh, I'm sorry, I almost forgot...

Speaker: Well, you get paid to say that so it doesn't mean anything.

Phil: But, my job is to run the management meetings and oversee the management team directly and then those guys oversee the staff that work below them and all of that. So, I'm concerned with the philosophy and direction of the ministry, the content of what we do and all of those things. Unanswerable questions generally find their way up to me.

In my spare time, I spend a lot of time editing books. I take John MacArthur's sermons from just the raw transcripts, an exact transcript of what he said and from that material assemble the first draft of most of his books. So the books come from what he's preached, the content is his and I organize it into chapters and ideas. Then, once I've got a manuscript in first draft form, it goes to him, he works his way through it and writes whatever he wants to add to it, takes away anything he doesn't want in the book and it comes back to me. I put all those changes in and do a kind of final edit on it, try to make sure that it reads as smoothly as possible, it's all coherent and everything. John frequently accuses me of adding the things that make people angry. If you've heard his story, you know that's all the stuff I put in there. Of course, you all hear him preach so you know that's not true but there is enough truth in it to that I can't deny it completely.

Moderator: About how long does it take you, Phil, from start to finish to edit a book.

Phil: It depends on the book. I've done them as quickly as two months. That would be the shortest. The better books, the more detailed books, I've spent many months on it and in some cases, one of the earliest books that I edited for John was "The Gospel According to Jesus." I think I spent four years working on that and I've gotten faster. The process has gotten more familiar to me and I'm more familiar with John's material and all so it wouldn't take me that long to edit that book again. But after that book, the manuscripts

themselves got a little bit simpler. That was written to be a textbook; it was published by the textbook division of Zondervan. Subsequently then, publishers wanted only 12 or 13 chapters and a little more straight-forward approach to the material. So it's a little simpler to edit the books we do these days. The one I'm working on right now is a book on the parables of Jesus.

Moderator: Good. Thank you. Well, now we know.

Mike, we'll give you one too. This question came and it said, "What was it like being a young pastor in Grace Community Church where John MacArthur is Senior Pastor, where men mighty in the Scriptures have preached?" So they're saying, "What was it like to be a young pastor to preach for the very first time?" And maybe even just coming into Grace Life, as well, too.

Mike: Sure. Those are fairly similar. You have Pastor John and his pulpit there across the patio and then Phil Johnson and Don Green and Stuart Scott and Lance Quinn to know that the folks who have been in this pulpit have been exemplary and challenging for me. You know, to be honest with you, I had to kind of not think about it very much. I had to just, sort of, keep my head down and, sort of, be as alone with the Lord as I could and recognizing that what I'm there to do is to simply proclaim his word, give vent to what he has said to his people and think of the pulpit as just another block of wood, another patch of carpet that I'm standing on as long as I don't step backwards two steps on Sunday evening which I was thinking about, though, that night was a little bit nerve-wracking.

I mean, I had to keep my mind grounded there but Austin Duncan scared me, you know, he heard that I was going to preach on Sunday night for the first time and so he says, "Now, the one thing, the one rule about preaching on Sunday night. Do you know what the one rule is?" and he drew it out like that. I was like, "What? What is it?" And he says, "Do not go past 7:30." I was like, "Oh no," because I was going to preach something that I've already preached and I don't know how long it took me so I was thinking, "Okay, I'm going to really try to tighten it up." So I said, "So, when am I going to get up there?" "You won't get up there past 6:35. 6:35, you'll be up there." Well, 6:35 came and went and I'm sitting there going, "What's going on here? Extra baptism or something like that," and it wound up being seven minutes less than I thought and so I manuscript my sermons and I certainly was going to manuscript that one for my first time there. I didn't want to be having to make stuff up on the fly or take stuff out on the fly but that's actually what I wound up having to do was think, "Okay, I've got to end here because Austin has terrified me that if I go past 7:30 that they're going to push me in the baptistry and walk out."

Speaker: And we would have.

Mike: So, aside from that, I think I was just thinking a lot about how to not go over time. But, yeah, it's one of those things where I think maybe in some time I'll reflect back on it and think about it but for now, it's the kind of thing where it's great because John is just so personable and really a very normal personal to be around. What a privilege for me to

get to know him a little bit personally and so, by that time, it was the kind of thing where it was a little bit easier for me.

Moderator. That's great. I'll even add: the first time I had lunch with Mike, didn't really know him, wanted to get to know him and here's this young guy we didn't really know and it can be a point of pride and really think you've arrived because you're being asked to be one of the co-pastors. So, I was really impressed the first day we had lunch together and I remember, Mike, you had said, you said, "You know, it was just like a year ago that the biggest thing in my life was if I could get one of my comments posted on Phil's blog," and he said, "Now look," he said, "I've got Phil's number in my cellphone!" I thought, "That's good. I like that." It was humble, it was refreshing and I think that really...

Mike: I don't remember that.

Moderator: Yeah, yeah. I promise I didn't make it up, so. But it impressed me. I was excited and I came home and told Mia and I just said, "I really like this guy, sharp and bright and yet very humble." So, we really appreciated that.

Good. Well, ladies, let us get to you guys too a little bit because I know that's what you've been anxious for. But, again, nothing strange. I know some of them had asked, "What's the most embarrassing thing your husband has ever done?"

Phil: That would take too long for Darlene to answer.

Moderator: And to protect the innocent, we thought we wouldn't go there. So, somebody had asked, though, Darlene, they said, "You've been a pastor's wife for quite some time. What do you say to young pastor's wives, the elder or layman's wife where the husband is going into ministry, for some advice on what to expect down the road?" And then it also says, "How do you deal with the hours of absence and how to be able to leave your husband to his studies?" So, kind of all together, whichever part you'd like to answer there.

Darlene: Well, he's not really mine to begin with. I mean, he is mine but the Lord gave him to me so he has to do what he has to do and that part hasn't really been hard. He's been able to study with headphones on or tune out the kids. He doesn't tune out the grandkids very well but that's to be expected, right? But, yeah, he's always been able to just do that and I kind of grew up in a home where my mom and dad, my dad was a pastor, too, so it's not as hard a thing maybe for me thinking about what he was going to do. I just would say, be encouraged. You know, the Lord has something for your husband to do and it's important work and you need to support him in it.

Phil: She's great about all that, too. She's never been a complainer even when I know she makes huge sacrifices. I'd only been at Grace Church for maybe a year when I started going overseas on fairly long trips. In those days, they'd send me out to do business for Grace To You, publishing things and all, and those were three week trips. I'd be...and before the days of the internet, I'd be out of touch for ten days at a time and in India

somewhere or the time I really remember, I was in Sri Lanka and you just literally couldn't call out and, I think, at that time, the kids got chicken pox, all three of them, and she's home alone taking care of them with chicken pox. It was pretty hard in those early days but she never complained; she just toughed it through and stayed with me.

Darlene: That's not entirely true. He did call me.

Phil: Oh yeah. Well, when I finally got to call her from Sri Lanka, somebody had set up like a little phone booth in the airport exit lounge and I'd been out of touch for so long I decided, "I don't care what this costs, I'm going to call her." It ended up costing me \$80 for about a 90 second phone call. If I'd waited three hours, I'd of been in Hong Kong and I could have called her easily. But I just couldn't wait so I called her and I talked for 90 seconds. She's on the other end just crying. Didn't say anything to me. She just cried so I paid \$80 to hear her cry for 90 seconds. It's the best \$80 I ever spent, though.

Moderator: That's good.

Well, Janna, turning to you: I know one of the things that I had asked before and somebody had put, they said, "Maybe share a verse that's held much encouragement for you in difficult, stressful, extra-busy times." Also, just talking, maybe even any books that have been beneficial to you or something along that line, too, if you could share with us.

Janna: Okay. Well, the verse that first comes to mind is in Colossians 3 where it's talking about "set your mind on the things above where Christ is," and I think that has just really shaped the way that I've dealt with it. He's away some of the time but just focusing my thoughts on eternity and knowing that those are the things that are really the most important and everything else kind of pales in comparison to that.

Moderator: And maybe even, kind of along the lines of Darlene's, anything, I don't know, maybe anything that was surprising to you as you guys made the trek out. You guys had a little different story from many years ago when they came from Chicago, but you guys relatively lately from New Jersey and coming out here and seminary and now him having this position, I mean, anything, I don't know, that struck you differently or you were surprised about or the blessings that have gone with it or...

Janna: That's a hard question. Let's see...well, it wasn't very hard for me to move out here. I think I was excited to just kind of get away and it was kind of adventurous and it was, actually, a great opportunity for us to grow together in our marriage, we'd only been married for about one year when we came out here. So, in that sense, it wasn't very difficult. I think as the time goes on, it's a little bit harder to be away from home. But there are just so many blessings of being in a good church, I think, particularly, just being under really good teaching has really changed our lives a lot and I just love sitting under his preaching. Sometimes I tell people that I'm just thankful that I always know who my pastor is going to be and I don't think a lot of people can say that.

Moderator: And you can't complain about him.

Janna. I can't complain about it.

Moderator: No, that's great, thanks, Janna, appreciate that.

Maybe back a little bit, kind of, one of the family questions. Phil and Darlene, somebody and this, I'll kind of ask two questions here in one and then you guys can kind of answer it because they were kind of similar but the first one I thought was kind of funny. It said, "What rules did you have for your boys as they were growing up?" And it says, "particularly in terms of driving a car?" And then the second one was, "What was important to you when raising your boys? How did you make that practical day-to-day." And then they said, "Any favorite books about raising children or things like that." But maybe the first one about rules.

Phil: Yeah, that's, I would almost guess that's a question from somebody who knows me because from the time my kids were born, when our third one was born we had just moved to California and it's our third son, boys and I kept kind of hoping for a girl but then we had nothing but boys and I think before we even got out of the hospital as a newborn, I thought, "You know, 16 years from now, I'm going to have three teenagers driving my car." And it scared me because when I was a teenager, from the time I got my driver's license until I graduated from college, I think I totaled four or five cars. I was never injured or anything like that but I was a kind of careless driver, I think.

Moderator: Yeah, I would agree. Yeah.

Phil: And my dad's insurance rates were sky high and he used to constantly tell me, "You know, you just wait until you have kids. I hope they get you back for this." So, I'm living under this fear that my kids are going to be costly when they come to driving time and so I concocted this plan when they were in junior high before they started driving. I said, "I'll tell you what, I'll make a deal with you guys: from the time you start to drive until you get old enough to pay for your own auto insurance, out from under my roof and the whole thing, if you can avoid ever getting in an accident that is your fault or a moving violation, if you keep your driver's record perfectly clear, I'll pay you \$1,000." When you're in junior high, \$1,000 is like a million dollars.

Moderator: Junior high.

Speaker: \$1,000 is a lot right now. Hey, my record is clear.

Phil: Well, I figured I'd save money that way. You know, it kind of worked, actually. None of the kids had any serious accidents. Only one of them, my youngest son, Jonathan, he was notoriously clumsy as a child and careless and carefree and didn't take anything seriously. Well, it's true and he would acknowledge that and I thought, I dreaded the day when he would drive; he's going to be terrible. He's the only one that collected the \$1,000 and he's a cop now. So, he's a policeman and he's a great driver.

Speaker: And you said his first accident was?

Phil: Oh, he had his first accident when he was a rookie cop. He was driving in the rain and on the on-ramp on a freeway and with bald tires, a police car, and he scraped up the side of the police car. That was the first thing that he did but he'd already gotten my \$1,000 so that didn't....and I saw the Lieutenant in charge of him after that and he said, "Aw, we love your son. He's a great cop," and I said, "Yeah, I heard he dented a patrol car last week." And he says, "Oh, he did? I didn't know that." Well, sorry. I said, "But you know, he's a great driver. That's the first accident he's ever had," and the Lieutenant said, "Well, if you're going to have an accident, you might as well have it in a city car, right?" So, I said, "That's what I thought."

But my eldest son, just kind of dented something with one of Russ Rice's trucks so he was out and that didn't cost me anything because it was Russ Rice's truck. And then my middle son got a speeding ticket so that saved me \$1,000. So the whole thing only cost me \$1,000 and it kept our family accident free for all those years. It really worked well.

Monitor: Anything else about anything, just raising boys and...

Phil: Yeah, I mean...we had some strict rules about certain things but I'm not a rule kind of person, you know. I don't even remember what unusual rules we had but I didn't encourage my kids to go to proms or do those kinds of activities. I tried to get them interested in other things and...

Darlene: Or hang at the mall...

Phil: ...yeah, they didn't hang out at the mall or do those time wasting activities. And, you know, it was good for their character I think. But other than that, I tried to let them learn how to govern their own lives, learn how to be self-controlled and all. None of them were as self-controlled as I'd like but, in general, they were pretty decent kids. They're all still part of Grace Church so they're raising their families here now.

Darlene: Two of them are married and the middle son has been married 11 years. Sorry, oh, goodness. Eleven years and the second one has been married 5 ½ years and then Jeremiah is getting married in just a month and a half. So, we can hardly wait.

Moderator: Well, and for all of you but I'll kind of turn to Mike and Janna first, but just as far as devotional times, "What do you guys do from a devotional standpoint?" And then even for Phil and Darlene, "What do you guys do family devotional wise?" But is there anything you guys do together, separately, that was the question that somebody asked.

Mike: So, certainly separately there were times when maybe we were reading the same thing but that kind of lasted not too long and we just decided that we were going to have our own relationship with the Lord at one point and then there were other times where

we've done different things: we've read through a book together after dinner ??? a book of the Bible, just read through Romans and I would kind of running comment on it but just kind of talk out, think out loud and she'd ask questions or make comments.

Other times we'd read a book where....right now, we're kind of reading a book separately on top of what we would do for ourselves called "The Everlasting Righteousness" by Horatius Bonar and we're kind of reading that separately and every once in a while, I'll get around to talk about what chapter, what quote in the chapter kind of stuck out to us.

Janna also does this thing where she made a question box and so when she's thinking through things, maybe she's home during the day when I'm not around and she'll think of a question, maybe coming out of her devotions or whatever else she's reading and she'll write it down on a post-it note, put it in the box and then every once in a while after dinner, I'll take one of those out and read the question and do my best to answer it and it usually spawns a good discussion.

Moderator: Anything as far as maybe yours more specifically family devotions?

Phil: We never did anything for any extended length of time that was very regimented. Here's why: I mean, I grew up in a family that went to a liberal church and sort of in a Southern culture where to talk about the Lord was relegated to Sunday and Sunday School and that was it. Then I became a Christian at age 17 and went off to Bible college and my roommate was a guy who'd grown up in a Christian family where they had daily devotions after dinner every night and I would go home with him on the weekends and they were still doing it but it was ordeal for the kids in that family. They'd all sit around the table until everybody finished and then the dad would take the Bible and open it up and make some boring comments about it and everybody would pray and you could tell they're all just waiting to get away from the table. It was really an uncomfortable situation and I always thought, when I saw that I thought, "I'm not going to put my kids through that sort of..." I don't want it to be regimented and obligatory. It's just an obligatory thing we have to do and now we think we're doing family devotions.

Plus, as I read Scripture and I've made this comment, I think even in Grace Life, there really isn't a lot outside the book of Proverbs, there isn't a lot of specific advice to parents on parenting. People are always asking about parenting books and parenting programs and all of that. Scripture gives some very basic principles that aren't programmatic at all and there is nothing there about an hour of family devotions or even 15 minutes of family devotions. But what it does say very specifically in Deuteronomy 6 is that you're to talk about these things all the time. So, if you relegate it to an hour on Sunday or 15 minutes after dinner, you kind of actually give your kids the wrong idea that somehow our time with the Lord is a segment we give him whereas what I wanted to do was raise my kids so that we could talk about the things of the Lord at any time: we'd do it going on a cross-country trip and you just observe life and observe the world and teach your kids out of everything you see some lesson about the character of God or the injustice in the world or the truth of total depravity or any doctrine you want, you can find illustrated in life. And that was my goal: to talk about those things all the time and never to give my kids the

idea that time with God is something you relegate to a little time. So we would occasionally read books together or do things like that but I tried not to get into a pattern that became odious to the kids. It mostly worked. My kids are depraved, though, you know that.

Moderator: So are mine.

I know you said not a lot of rules and things but somebody asked this question, "Did your family do Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny or Halloween? Why or why not?"

Mike: We didn't. Are you guys going to do that?

Speaker: I don't know.

Phil: Well, haven't talked about it yet. I'll tell you why: when I was a kid, my parents loved that kind of fantasy, my dad still does. In fact, my mom and dad were not happy that we didn't do a lot of emphasis on Santa and the fantasy characters as we were growing up. They thought that was great fun but I have this vivid recollection when I was in second grade or thereabout and my mom used to cut my hair, I didn't go to the barber, I'd sit on this yellow kitchen stool that we had while she would cut my hair and it was an unpleasant situation and I was wiggly and she'd clunk me on the head with the scissors if I got too wiggly. And so I'm sitting there trying to be as still as I can and for whatever reason, it wasn't near Christmas or Easter or any of that, I started thinking about Santa Claus and I realized, "That guy can't be real." And so I said, "Hey, mom, there's no such thing as Santa, right?" And she says, "Yeah, you've figured it out," and she admitted to me, you know, there is no Santa. I'm seven years old and grown up believing in Santa Claus and now I realize there's no such thing. And I thought about it a little longer and I thought, "Well, that means there's no Easter Bunny or Tooth Fairy either," and she said, "That's right." And so I started thinking, "What other fantasy characters have they pumped into my head?" And I'm thinking about Santa who knows all your thoughts, I mean, he's like Jesus, right? He's a whole lot like Jesus and I said, "Is Jesus real?" and she thwacked me on the head with the scissors. "Of course," she says, "Why would you ask that?" like this is an outrageous thing but in my mind there wasn't a lot of difference and I just didn't want my kids every to be confused about the difference between fantasy and reality. I think it's a mistake to deliberately confuse a child.

I didn't care if they read fantasy books, "The Chronicles of Narnia." They were way older than Harry Potter but I don't think I would have forbidden them to read it. What I wouldn't want them to do is confuse the clear line between fantasy and reality. And so I tried from the time they were born not to do that and maybe we emphasized or maybe we told them too little about Santa because they didn't even know his name. Jonathan would go to the mall and he'd go, "Hey Mom, look, it's the Christmas man!" I was kind of proud of that but my mom was appalled.

Moderator: How could you get through life without....

Phil: Yeah, so I don't think people need to bend over backwards as far as we did to keep Santa out of your kid's instruction or whatever but I do think parents, Christian parents in particular, have a strong duty not to let their kids become confused about that line between fantasy and reality.

Mike: I don't know what the answer is for that for you. I bet your family didn't do any of that stuff.

Janna: What? Santa Claus?

Mike: Yeah, and the Easter Bunny and Tooth Fairy.

Janna: We had Santa Claus but I never believed in him, so I knew it was my dad.

Mike: What does that mean?

Janna: I knew it was my dad.

Mike: Oh, yeah.

Moderator: He brought you presents anyway, though, didn't he? That's the thing about Santa, you don't have to believe in him to benefit from him.

Mike: My parents enjoyed taking the credit for my presents so... I was four and I just, I don't know if I stumbled upon it myself or like you did, but I just kind of realized, "This can't possibly be right," and...

Phil: You came to that realization at a much earlier age than I did.

Mike: My parents will tell you that's like me but and just kind of like, "Yeah, there's no way, right?" and, yeah, my mom wasn't upset about that whole thing. Yeah...I felt cool because I knew all the things that the other kids didn't at school, these dopes, they're convinced that there is this, really, this mythical creature who comes to every house on one night. Get out of here with that.

Phil: By the way, I figured out the difference between Santa and Jesus because we went to Sunday School every Sunday and I figured there's something serious about that that's not true in the Santa story. And I don't know what I would have thought if I had grown up in a family that didn't care about church attendance, never went to Sunday School or whatever. I probably would have become a very early unbeliever or skeptic.

Moderator: Alright, well, let's move a little bit into some heavier theology questions that people have asked. So, Janna and Darlene, this one's for you. No, no wait. But somebody asked...

Mike: Darlene has a specialty in Semitics.

Phil: Ask her about the hypostatic union. She's really good at that.

Moderator: But this one and even for me when I read these questions, I mean, it might be even good, we hear you guys...you guys, I'm grouping all of you seminary pastor people together, sorry about that, but we commoners often hear you guys talk about big words that I don't think we always understand and maybe you can even give some definitions because two of these questions were: one says, "What does it mean to be a leaky dispensationalist?"; and then the other one says, "What do you believe are the strongest arguments against the amillennial position?" So, I kind of grouped them together and maybe just even give a definition because we hear that stuff and I think once you explain it, we'd all say, "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, I believe that. I didn't know you called it that." So, maybe start with a simple definition of dispensationalist, amillennialist and then go into the questions.

Mike: So, dispensationalism is kind of an unfortunate name but it refers to the theological teaching that, if you want to boil it down to its bare bones, that there is a future restoration expected for national Israel, that in the eschaton at the end of time when Jesus returns, part of that program will be to regather Israel as a nation into her land where she would receive the blessings and the promises that are promised to Israel as a nation in the Old Testament.

The amillennial position is mutually exclusive with that but it's not exactly the opposite of that. The amillennial idea comes from the notion that there is a thousand year reign of Christ, the millennial kingdom that we read about in Revelation 20, that the "a" in front of millennial is the alpha privative, there is no millennium, meaning that the millennium is now. The way that things spiritually reinterpreted from the nation of Israel that that now applies to the church in a spiritual sense and so Jesus is reigning as King in the promised Davidic kingdom. There is disagreement about amillennial people, whether they think that that's actually happening right here on earth now or he's reigning in heaven and then he'll manifest the reign on the earth. That's kind of the idea.

Moderator: Do you want to talk about what it means to be leaky?

Phil: Yeah, in fact, I've got to point out that he couldn't he even define those things without using words like eschaton and alpha privative.

Moderator: That's when you saw my eyes glaze over.

Mike: It's just 'cause I'm a nerd. That's it.

Moderator: Alpha privative.

Mike: So amoral is without morals, you know. A-amillennial.

Moderator: I understood all those words.

Phil: So, dispensationalism, another way to see it or the earlier way to see it would have been to say that that's the system that is spelled out in the Scofield Study Bible. If you had encountered a dispensationalist prior to 1950 or so, he would just say, "You want to understand my system, get yourself a Scofield Study Bible and follow the notes there." That's classic dispensationalism and John MacArthur calls himself a leaky dispensationalist because he's abandoned most of the distinctives of Scofieldism and really retained dogmatically only the notion that there is a future in the divine plan for national Israel, that national Israel will be restored and promises made to the nation of Israel will be literally fulfilled just like the curses were literally fulfilled.

Moderator: And what were some of the things he abandoned then? What a classic dispensationalist would be?

Phil: The big thing he abandoned and it incorporates a whole lot of those ideas. One of the ideas, for example, was that the Sermon on the Mount doesn't apply to this dispensation. These are law words that apply to the millennial kingdom or the time of Christ but not the current dispensation of grace. Obviously, if you've listened to John preach through the Sermon on the Mount, you know he does teach that it applies to you and to me and it's applicable to us today. But the big picture is: he began to abandon those dispensationalist distinctives with the Lordship controversy. A lot of that stuff comes unraveled when you understand the principles of the Lordship controversy that the no-Lordship perspective is really and I'm going to use my own big word here, it's really kind of Antinomianism.

Mike: You all know what that means from Philippians 3, right? Crickets. Get the tape.

Phil: Yeah, Antinomianism is the view that the law has no applicability, the Ten Commandments have no applicability to us as Christians but we're not under the law but under grace and that means, they say, that all the principles of the law, all the righteousness revealed in the law, all of that stuff is irrelevant to us. One of the manifestations of it is the no-Lordship view, the view that you can be saved simply by asking Jesus for eternal life or inviting him into your heart or whatever. You don't need to repent; you don't need to turn from sin because to do those things would be to do a work and we're saved not by works but totally by grace. That's a kind of radical Antinomianism that grows out of dispensationalist teaching. Historically that view has been connected with Dallas Seminary and the Scofield view and that classic dispensationalism.

When John MacArthur began to encounter that and see that that's not what Scripture teaches and preach about it way back really probably before he came to Grace Church because if you'll listen to the first message he preached at Grace Church it was a message titled "How To Play Church." It was an attack on that sort of "all you have to do is ask Jesus into your heart." And his convictions on that developed into the Lordship controversy and when we were doing the gospel according – this is one reason it took four years – he took a really hard look at where does this idea come from? What is it rooted in? And it was rooted in the notion, a dispensationalist notion, that people under

the old covenant were saved in one way and people under the new covenant are saved in a totally different way. Of course, Scripture doesn't teach that but that was an idea that was strongly hinted at in the Scofield Bible and commonly held and had been developed by other dispensationalists and so in the process of abandoning all of that, I think John also dumped a lot of other dispensationalist ideas. So he calls himself a leaky dispensationalist, meaning you can't understand John MacArthur if all you know about dispensationalism is from the Scofield Bible.

Mike: Other things would be there were two new covenants: one made with Israel, one with the church. Things like the earthly and heavenly destinies of these so this radical discontinuity, this radical division between Israel and the church meant that the new heavens was for the heavenly people, the church, the new earth was for the earthly people, Israel, and so these two peoples of God were going to spend eternity one in heaven and one on earth. Those are the kinds of things that most dispensationalists even now, none living would hold that anymore.

The best arguments against the amillennial position: we could spend the rest of the night on that...

Speaker: ...but let's not.

Mike: No. The idea of amillennialism, especially if you read Kim Riddlebarger's "A Case for Amillennialism," is a big thing going throughout the New Testament seeing the phrases "there is this age" and then "there is the age to come." This age and the age to come. "This sin shall not be forgiven either in this age nor the age to come." So, they're saying, "See, there's two ages. There is this age and then there is the one to come, the eternal state." There is no middle 1,000 year millennial reign that's going on on earth in between this age and the eternal state. I think the easiest way – that's amillennialism, there is no millennium, right? I think the easiest way to refute that is to go to passages in the Scripture that are simply not understandable if they were to apply to this present age nor understandable if they were to apply to the eternal state. For example, Isaiah 65:20 is speaking about that time and Isaiah says, "No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, Or an old man who does not live out his days; For the youth will die at the age of one hundred." The youth will die at the age of one hundred. Now, we don't talk about 100 year old men dying as youth at 100 years old in this age. Neither in the eternal state can anybody die because death is destroyed and sin is abolished so we're not seeing people being considered a young man dying at 100 now and we're not going to see anybody dying in the eternal state so where does that go? Where do you place that?

A similar thing: in Zechariah 8, talking about – I can just summarize it – Zechariah 8 talks about how in Jerusalem when Israel is reconstituted and in Jerusalem there are going to be the kids playing with the old men in the streets and the old men are going to be resting on their canes because of age, it says. Well, an old man won't be resting on a cane because of age in the eternal state because all infirmity is banished and we don't see old men and children rejoicing in the streets of Jerusalem because there's peace from their enemies on every side. Far from it right now, right? So, that kind of thing. Zechariah 14,

a similar kind of thing where the nations are going to come in the kingdom and if says Jesus is going to reward all those who are obedient and strike all of those who are disobedient. Again, the nations are not obedient to Jesus now and Jesus is not reigning from Jerusalem right now but in the eternal state when all enemies of Christ are abolished and it's just heaven, there aren't going to be any nations that need to be disciplined. So, there are all these passages of Scripture that don't find fulfillment now and don't find fulfillment – it's impossible, right? - in the eternal state. That's just one argument but I think if you have the discussion long enough, that helps. Surely there are others.

Phil: My answer to that would be even shorter. That's a brilliant argument, by the way, but I would just say that the best argument I know against amillennialism is Revelation 20. I don't see how that chapter can sensibly be reconciled with an amillennial view. And, in fact, if you listen to amillennialists preach, you won't hear many of them address that chapter and if they do, they spend their time explaining away what it says rather than doing exposition of the text.

Mike: Tom Schreiner preached through Revelation 20 as an amillennialist and came out as a premillennialist. That's cool. And that whole thing, the way that they do that is to say that Revelation 19 – so they take a view of Revelation that says it's written in a recapitulatory sort of structure. So, there is a scene that happens up until a certain chapter and then it starts all over from the beginning again and then it starts all over from the beginning again. So, Revelation 19, Christ comes back, there is the return of Christ and then Revelation 20, here's the millennial reign and that's the natural way to think of that so premillennial, he's going to come before the millennium but they say, no, Revelation 20 is the restarting of that whole pattern. But one of the markers in the narrative there of Revelation 19 and 20 is this repeated phrase kai eidon in the Greek “and I saw” in Revelation 19 and 20, “And I saw heaven opened.” Verse 17, “Then I saw,” same in the Greek, “an angel standing.” Verse 19, “And I saw the beast and the King of kings.” Then it continues right through chapter 20 and 21. Chapter 20:1, “Then I saw an angel coming down.” Verse 4, “Then I saw thrones.” Verse 11, “Then I saw a great white throne.” Verse 12, “And I saw the dead.” 21 now, into the new heaven and new earth, “Then I saw a new heaven.” So, it's bogus to claim a recapitulation there at that point because you've got the same structure, we call it a macrosyntactical structure, from Revelation 19 to 20 to 21.

Moderator: Glazing again. Close to glazing. That was good, though.

Phil: Macrosyntactical? Okay.

Mike: Macro – big, syntax....

Phil: I get it. I'm going to just try to work that into something I say in the next month or so.

Mike: Put it in the next book. Animals have macrosyntactical...

Phil: Lance Quinn used to say, “I dare you to work this word into the next book,” only he would choose words that he liked like “bogus.” He said, “You've got to have the word 'bogus' int the next book.”

Mike: I hear they used to do that for new pastors the first time they preached? So, I remember people talking about how, “Okay, it's your first time in the pulpit so you've got to work in 'lollapalooza.’” I'm glad that stopped before I came.

Moderator: A little something different. Lately, obviously with Strange Fire and all the talk around that and talking about the Spirit leading in charismatic viewpoint and things, somebody asked this question that I thought was really good: “Is it unbiblical to say, 'The Lord is leading me to do this,' or, 'The Lord put it on my heart,' since we don't know God's will apart from his inspired word?”

Phil: I would say, yes, that's unbiblical because you don't have the authority to say, “Thus saith the Lord,” unless you truly have a word from the Lord. You can say something like, “You know, I just think the Lord's trying to lead me to do this.” If circumstances close off the thing you want to do and there is an open door over here, you can say, “This seems to be the way the Lord is leading me,” but that's different from saying, “The Lord is leading me,” or, “The Lord pulled me,” whatever people say.

Mike: How would you know, right? How would you know for sure? How do you know that it's him inclining your affections one way or if it's your own affections inclining one way because of your own sinful nature? The phrase “led by the Spirit” really only occurs twice in the New Testament: once in Romans 8 to talk about all who were led by the Spirit are sons of God and that's right after the verse that talks about putting to death the deeds of the body; the other spot is in Galatians 5 where he's talking about the spirit and the flesh war against each other and you've got the fruit of the Spirit and the deeds of the flesh. In both contexts, “the Spirit led me to” in the Scriptures refer to mortification and sanctification and putting off sin and putting on righteousness, “the Spirit led me to holiness,” and not, “the Spirit led me to tell you that I'm going to be spending the night in your house,” or, “on your couch,” or, “that I should marry your daughter,” or any sort of weird thing that you're just trying to get the stamp of authority of the Holy Spirit to certify your own thoughts and impressions. I wrote a post about that on the Cripplegate called “The Spirit Led Me To,” so for more on that, you can go there.

Phil: Yeah, because I think we hear a lot even where in Acts Paul says “this door was closed.” We hear that all the time. The Lord closes one door and he opens a window. We hear those things and it's like, “Is that bad to say?”

Mike: Cheesy.

Phil: What's bad is to attribute any kind of authority to that. I think everybody has these intuitive thoughts that spring to mind, “I don't know where that came from but suddenly I thought of this thing,” and sometimes those things work out well but sometimes they don't and I think it's one of the signs of immaturity to think that you've got God in your

head prompting these thoughts. God can use those spontaneous thoughts just like he uses everything else providentially to direct us, but it took a series of disastrous decisions in my own life before I got to the point where I was mature enough not to trust those intuitions, not to invest them with any kind of authority. There are times even today when if I don't have any clue what else to do and there is no principle of wisdom that would dictate one way or the other, there's no biblical rule about it or whatever, of course I'm going to follow my intuition or my strongest desire either way. And, yeah, God leads us that way sometime but you don't ever know what the Lord's doing or why he's directing your steps until you're able to look back on it. Sometimes even then you don't know for sure and I think it's a mistake to attribute to God some intention that you can't possibly know for sure if that's accurate.

Mike: And it's one thing to want to give him credit, it's one thing to say, "I want to acknowledge that this good thing that happened in my life wasn't of my own doing but it was gift from God, every good thing comes from him," and so you say something like, "The Lord led me in that way and he was guiding the whole time, I could see it." That's just because we don't want to take any credit ourselves for good things, we want to ascribe glory to him where it's due but that's a retrospect thing. That's not a, "Here's what I'm thinking and God agrees with me," kind of thing.

Phil: Yes, and people use that when they're looking ahead. It's one thing to look back on what the Lord did and acknowledge it but to look ahead into the future and claim that kind of divine authority sometimes is just a way of trying to lend authority to what you know in your heart is a bad decision or a stupid thing to do or a foolish thing. A lot of charismatics who listen to their hearts like that do the most foolish things and attribute the rationale to God and think that they're honoring God by doing that but they're actually dishonoring him.

Moderator: I think even extreme cases where people have said, "The Lord led me to leave my wife," or things like that have been said too and I think it all kind of falls under that. The more we do it, the more easily it is to even justify sin and things like that.

Next question: "The New Testament gives certain commands to believers that we today categorize as cultural issues that do not apply today such as head coverings for women at worship service. How do we know when to separate cultural temporal commandments from permanent ones that we must carry on today?"

Phil: That's yours.

Mike: The one that's most obvious in that frame is the head coverings of 1 Corinthians 11. The answer to that question is that's just submitting yourself to sound biblical interpretation, asking yourself: Who's the author? Who is the intended audience? What's the context in which he's writing? What's the occasion for which he's writing? What is it that he's asking people to do and why? With head coverings, for example, it's the idea that says, "But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved. For

if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head. For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels." Then it goes on to say that that's a functional distinction, a functional subordination of women under men, not an essential subordination so there's not an inequality or inferiority because of who the woman is but simply in a matter of roles. But in that sense right there, you've got the command, the application is: women, cover your head while praying and prophesying. Then you've got the principle of which that is an application which is: a woman is to show signs of submissiveness. Then you have the ground for that which is: creation. Woman was not created first, man was. The woman was created for man's sake and so on. So you have a principle rooted in creation which transcends cultures. That's why submission and headship aren't cultural things because they're grounded in creation. 1 Timothy 2, look it up, Paul grounds his command for the woman to not to teach or have authority over man because it was not Eve who was formed first but Adam and Eve was the one who was deceived and fell into transgression first. So, the ground for the command, the ground for the principle of submission is something that transcends cultures, however, the application in 1 Corinthians 11 of that specific principle of submission is something that is cultural, the head covered. Now, a woman whose head is uncovered, it doesn't communicate anything about submission or headship of the man.

What might? What might be a contemporary analog? Some people have suggested a wedding ring. That's okay but both men and women wear wedding rings. I think one of the things that's an analog to that temporarily is the woman taking the man's last name in marriage. It's something done that's a cultural expression of submission reflecting the principle of submission grounded in the created order. Does that make any sense? Do you want to help me out there in making it more clear?

Phil: No, that's good and I would say but I know there are a lot of people who find that genuinely confusing and I would say that if your conscience troubles you about it, I'd much rather see the woman wear a head covering than decide that, okay because Mike and others say that's a cultural issue then I can take any commandment I want in Scripture and blow it off as a cultural thing and ignore it. Not the case.

Mike: And so other commands would be why don't we have animal sacrifices? Or, why don't we rest on Saturday? Or, why don't men corner their beards? Or, why can I mix fabrics? That kind of thing and that, again, you go through the process of proper interpretation, that instruction was given under the Mosaic covenant which was designed, among other things, to separate Israel from the nations, to show their distinction because God was a God in distinction from the gods of the nations and so are we under the Mosaic covenant now? No, so really that's not a cultural reason that we don't corner our beards or we don't care about mixing fabrics, it's a covenantal reason, it's a theological reason that we're not under that covenant. But here you have a command of

the New Testament, the woman's head covering, and I think, again, there's a three step, it's the application of a principle that's grounded in creation. If the application was grounded in creation and there wasn't that middle step, then it would transcend time but because there is that middle step, I think that it's an instantiation of that principle. There's another one for you.

Moderator: He's going to get one in every time. I think that's great and it was neat, I even on Grace To You, Pastor John had a blog and he's been going the last week or two about why he teaches verse-by-verse and as you were explaining that, I just thought his thing that he had posted yesterday or today, I don't know which one it was but he said, "A pastor who preaches verse-by-verse will have a congregation that is also doing personal Bible study and taking things in context." And even as you were saying that, I don't see us, our congregation, struggling as much as I have in other churches just because we've been well taught, we see the context, we see how it fits together in the book, in the culture, in the time and that alleviates a lot of those problems as well, too. So, it's an encouragement to me to hear these guys explain it, to hear Pastor John explain it, to sit under the teaching for many, many years and then you're kind of sitting there going, "Really? That makes perfect sense now," because I've heard it taught verse-by-verse in context.

Phil: By the way, the head covering is the most hotly contested of those but there are other cultural issues in Scripture that are not pertaining to the old covenant or whatever. One would be...

Mike: The holy kiss. Sorry.

Phil: Yeah, if you go to Russia, the men still kiss one another right on the mouth. They actually believe that's what Scripture commands when it says "greet one another with a holy kiss," smack that other guy on the mouth.

Moderator: And we're not starting that. Good hermeneutics is important there. I don't care how many big words you use, Mike, I'm not doing that.

Phil: What I was going to say was that throughout Scripture you see sackcloth and ashes as the symbol of mourning, we don't do that today but there are other symbols of mourning that we use to show respect for people who have gone to heaven and so on. Those are manifestly cultural issues. There is just nothing about that that would make it universal for all or obligatory on all people for all ages and yet there are commands in Scripture to put on sackcloth and ashes. We take the principle behind that rather than the literal fulfillment of it.

Moderator: Let's go to the next one. Speaking of culture, you're not going to find this in Scripture but the principle and I'd love to hear you guys...somebody asked this question, "How should Christians use social media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. for God's glory?" and "How do New Testament directives on speech conduct apply." Secondly, this person said, "I'm thinking especially of the popularity of discernment divas and how

there's an appeal to call out false teaching, false teachers but the tone is often rude or uncharitable and I was wondering what place that has for the layperson or if that should be left to pastors, elders?"

I think we see that a lot now. This is something that, boy, just in the last ten years has become huge. I was talking to Phil even the other day, even seeing different pastors calling each other out in Facebook or Twitter or whatever and it just seems...this is a brand new things so how does that work? How do we use New Testament directives on speech conduct? Then, also is that something for just pastor and elders, are laypeople okay? Just your thoughts on that.

Phil: I would say the question almost answers itself because if you take all the biblical restrictions on how we use our tongues and simply apply that to social media, you'll be pretty safe. And a good rule of thumb is: if you wouldn't say it in person in public under your own name, then don't go on the internet anonymously and post it. That's been my objection to some of the discernment divas. I think that somebody is quoting me when they use that language because I sort of picked a fight online with this little cult of women who feel it's their calling to watch the greater flock and do it with a kind of snippy, irreverent, harsh-tongued style and they are women who, in many cases, in fact we know a couple of them personally, one of them is a chain smoker who doesn't go to any church but she constantly blogs about the problems with all the churches in the world. One way you can tell that one of these "hobbyists" who sees it as his calling to critique everybody is somebody who shouldn't be doing this is, look at his private life. A lot of times they are people who don't go to the church because they've put themselves in a position theologically where anybody who disagrees with them is not to be fellowshiped with and since nobody agrees with them perfectly, there's not a church in the world they could go to and be happy. That's a really rotten attitude and there's nothing about that that's discerning.

Now, a lot of what they critique may need to be critiqued but not by somebody like that. And Scripture is very clear about the biblical qualifications for a spiritual leader just the same as the qualifications for a pastor. So, in general, I've often said, "I don't think that sort of full-time criticism, it probably ought not to be done by anybody." Even a pastor who's preaching should be more edifying and positive than he is critical and a discernment expert. Now, if all you ever read of me was my blog, you might say, "Well, he's a hypocrite because he criticizes all the time." That's what my blog was doing but if you listen to me preach, you'll find I think I have a little more well-rounded worldview than that. But there are people who, that's really what they do and they seem to glory and enjoy finding everybody else's mistakes and broadcasting them to the world. That's just an evil attitude. Particularly, I think, it's not the business of women to be criticizing pastors who they aren't accountable to and who aren't really accountable to them by long distance in anonymous blogs on the internet. It's just not a good practice. That's not the sort of structure Christ erected to keep his flock safe. There are certain duties that do belong to pastors and elders but not to some anonymous woman on the internet.

Mike: I would just appeal to you guys: don't be the angry prophet. Don't be the guy who's just...

Phil: Yeah, let me do that.

Mike: Yeah. You didn't do that. Especially in the way that you dealt with the follow-up and the comments and just the way...your gentleness was manifest for those who had eyes to see anyway, didn't have an ax to grind. Yes, Jesus spoke more about hell than anybody else; he spoke more about hell than he spoke about heaven. Yes, it's the Jesus you can't ignore. For crying out loud, our pastor has sounded that message forth but if all I see on my news feed when your name pops up on Facebook or all I see in my Twitter feed when your thing comes up is just haranguing about something new that's just wrong with the church, it's just laborious and it doesn't represent Christ very well because Christ didn't walk around his entire life with a scowl on his face, just kind of saying, "Look at those guys over there," he can't stand them and that kind of thing. There was graciousness, there was mercy, there was a gentleness and a tenderness that you need to manifest, I think, in a well-rounded way in your personal interactions when you're face-to-face with somebody and in your online persona if that's your problem. It's grieving to me for folks that I know that are in our church who really appreciate Pastor John's ministry who has marked his ministry by a no compromise, stay ground in the word, firmly fixed with absolutely, as I said, no compromise. For folks to be here and think, "That's what we're doing. We're being like Pastor John," and you don't know him personally and you haven't seen that just soft graciousness of him and you try to out-MacArthur MacArthur is really what happens and you wind up being something that he's not even but you think, "I'm following in his footsteps." That's just grieving to me because it's just so not reality: not for Jesus, not for our pastor.

Yeah, I'm not saying that things shouldn't be called out, I'm not saying that we should be undiscerning or sit back and say nothing and I wouldn't introduce a clergy/laity distinction and you helped me think through that the other day, as if to say only pastors or elders can do this and the layman shouldn't do this. But you need to think about that. Who are you accountable to and who is accountable to you? And are these people that you're calling out, do you have any spiritual insight into their life and that kind of thing?

Plus, too, the other thing that I was thinking and then I'll shut up: this idea in Galatians 6:1-2, "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted." The angry prophets that I'm thinking of as I talk about this and I recognize seeing and hearing and reading, I just can't believe that those people are in touch with their own sin very much because to be that consistently annoyed at the failures of others to me communicates a blindness about the mourning they should have over their own sin. If I get worked up like that and I'm getting ready to post something that's angry, righteously angry I hope, the first thing I'm going to think of is a log, speck and looking to myself with the standard or measure that you use, it will be measured to you. Sheesh, that's going to give me pause and it's going to make me a little bit more gentle, I hope, because I want the Lord to be gentle with me and I know my own shortcomings. Your

sins should be the biggest concern to you in terms of everybody else's sins...I can keep going.

Phil: Let me say one other thing too: there is a lot and if you listen to me you know I think this, there is a lot in the current evangelical movement that's crying to be criticized. The state of the church is currently a mess and I think it's a worse mess than it was just before the Protestant Reformation. I think we're in a worse state now than the medieval Catholic Church was so there's a lot that validly needs to be critiqued by responsible people who are careful critics but if that's your calling and you want to exercise your critical gift, don't do it anonymously. Take responsibility for what you say and that will keep you on your toes a lot. That will keep you, I think, at least make you thoughtful before you go posting things. And remember what Scripture does say about how to control the tongue.

Moderator: Kind of going along with that but different, here's one that says, "Seeing how contemporary events in the world are developing, especially in the Middle East and the rise of pervasive liberalism even in the US," and kind of what you were just talking about the church, "how do you see such events in light of Revelation and eschatology? I'm looking for an end date here."

Phil: You won't get one from me. When I first became a Christian, actually the first person I ever heard preach the gospel was Jack Van Impe. He doesn't do that much anymore but he was doing it in the 70s. But he also majored a lot in Bible prophecy and I was baptized by a pastor who had a television program every week called "Thy Kingdom Come" where he talked about nothing but prophecy. Every Sunday he'd do exposition in the book of Revelation or some other prophetic passage and in those days, this was in the early 1970s, one of the best-selling books was Hal Lindsey's "The Late Great Planet Earth" and everybody saw the world sort of catapulting towards the great tribulation and the end and a lot of people still think that way but a lot of those guys were making, not date setting guesses but estimates. I remember Van Impe saying he couldn't see how the Lord could possibly tarry past 1980. A lot of people were saying that and some people even did set dates and they've all been wrong so far so I don't read the newspaper and look at current events and try to fit that into some timetable that I see in Scripture. The general drift of the world has always been towards the great tribulation and it's more that way now than it's ever been but that doesn't mean it might not be another 1,000 years. If the Lord waited another 1,000 years to come, I wouldn't say, "Well, that sure destroys my view of Scripture," because I don't see anything in Scripture that tells me this age we're living in is certainly the last generation. Honestly, I don't see how the Lord can wait much longer but if I lived in the year 1000, I would have said the same thing and then people did, even, in those days. But the Lord's mercy and his long-suffering is infinitely greater than any of us ever imagines so if the Lord waits another 1,000 years it won't surprise me at all. On the other hand, if he comes back next week, that wouldn't surprise me either. I'm ready. I want to be as ready as I can so I don't know.

Mike: The practical import is the same whether he's coming tomorrow or 1,000 years from now. Pastor John says all the time, "There is nothing on the prophetic timetable that

needs to happen before Christ's return. His coming is imminent.” Whether it's tomorrow or 1,000 years, it doesn't change what we do: we preach the gospel; we seek to put off sin and put on righteousness; we worship the Lord with a gathered assembly; we disciple one another and labor to present every man complete in Christ. And when he does come, the Bible teaches that the next mark of eschatology is that those who are his at his coming will be caught up with him in the air, we'll meet him there and we'll go into heaven and enjoy the marriage supper of the Lamb. The tribulation, the day of the Lord's judgments will be poured out on the earth which we won't be here for and then after those seven years, we'll be back for 1,000 years coming with Christ at his Second Coming behind him. We'll be coming with him to the earth as he comes to set up his kingdom. And no matter how bad it's getting, our mission is the exact same.

Phil: Those Christians who lived in the first century could not possibly have imagined that the Lord would wait 2,000 years before he returned, and yet it makes perfect sense to us looking back over history that what God has done has glorified him and brought multitudes into the kingdom and his waiting has been a merciful act but it could happen at any time. Jesus himself told two successive parables in the Olivet Discourse: the first one was about these sort of servants who, their master was gone into another country and they didn't think he was coming back soon and so they were fooling around. I think, was that the one where they beat up his son? I forget, but he came back sooner than they expected and he punished them for their unfaithfulness...

Speaker: He cut them to pieces.

Phil: Yeah, he cut them to pieces, that's right. Because they weren't prepared for him to come back sooner than they expected. And then the very next parable that he tells is about the bridesmaids with the oil and they didn't have enough oil to keep their lamps burning if the bridegroom tarried. He was late getting to the wedding and they ran out of oil and they had to go and buy more and while they were out at the store buying more oil, they must have gone to Walmart because they're open all night and long check-out lines. They were caught in the Walmart check-out line and they didn't make it back to the wedding on time and they were punished because they didn't expect the bridegroom to tarry as long as he did. So, Jesus is saying, “Be prepared either way. I might come sooner than you think. I might come later than you think. Either way, be ready.”

Moderator: I know there's not great one to end on and this probably definitely isn't it but I do know this is one that, Mike, you even wanted to kind of hit on, in light of everything, again, going back to Strange Fire and we've even seen things where I know things have been said about John Piper being at this conference and how would he sit on stage with somebody from this charismatic bent, things along that line. Now, something has come up lately where Pastor John has agreed to go to the T for G Conference coming up and somebody asked, “Given the recent events that Matt Chandler has been involved in, will the call to separate and call out that was given at Strange Fire be undermined by Pastor John sharing the stage with him at T for G?” So, “Oh, is this hypocritical of Pastor John to now go to this conference even though we would probably say T for G is good but

there are some people up on stage that maybe we wouldn't agree with. Is that being hypocritical?"

Mike: I wanted to ask this question so that Phil could answer it but I'll say one thing: I think it's manifest that Pastor John doesn't think so. Right? He's the one who has issued the strongest of calls and exhortations and what people are calling even "harsh statements" which I think is a mischaracterization but nevertheless, at Strange Fire and the one who's being vilified throughout the evangelical subculture for daring to suggest that so many hundreds of millions of Christians could be deceived or professing Christians could be lost and that kind of thing and yet he, himself, nobody twisted his arm to go to this conference, he was invited and after thinking and praying about it and receiving counsel, he decided to go. And I don't think that he has such a short memory that that's a contradiction in his mind so if you are out there and you're worried about that, "Wait a second, didn't we just say this and now he's doing that?" Well, maybe we didn't say what you think we said. Maybe you've interpreted that a little bit too stringently and that's something to keep in mind.

Phil: Yeah, if someone thinks that at Strange Fire John said we should never have anything to do with men like John Piper or Matt Chandler or any of the Together for the Gospel speakers, then they weren't listening very carefully because John expressly said that while he disagrees with John Piper on this issue, he's learned a lot from Piper and he appreciates his commitment to the gospel. What Together for the Gospel is advocating has nothing to do with the charismatic movement. This is what binds us together with these guys are thoughtful, good, sound on the gospel charismatics, charismatics with some kind of legitimate biblical commitment, men who we regard as brothers in Christ. What binds us together is our common commitment to the gospel and it's legitimate to say that.

Furthermore, I think the reason John is going to Together for the Gospel is they specifically asked him to preach on John 6 which is that great passage that is an expose of false faith, spurious faith, phony discipleship. One of the things John's been criticized for in the wake of Strange Fire is, as Mike said, "How can he say there are so many charismatics who probably aren't even Christians, they're deceived as the gospel...is he saying they're not real believers? Does he really believe that many people might be pseudo-disciples?" And John 6 is the answer to that question. Yes, that's exactly what Jesus faced in his time. Not everybody who says Lord, Lord is a true follower of Christ and if John's able to make that point clear in a context like Together for the Gospel, that's a great opportunity. I personally urged him to say yes to that invitation and so did Mike. We were there when he made the phone call.

Speaker: (unintelligible)

Phil: I told Mike, don't tell John but I told Mike, "Turn on your cellphone. This is an historic moment," so he recorded our side of that phone call.

Mike: Don't tell John that. Yeah, and again...

Phil: Don't ask for a copy of that.

Mike: The other thing there too is that there is a difference between heresy and bad theology and I think that that's a really important point. If you obliterate all of those distinctions between simply something which is false like the continuation of the miraculous gifts from heresy like the prosperity gospel, if you can't see a distinction between that, we need to talk because there is a difference between heresy and bad theology and though you don't ignore the bad theology, there's a difference between bad theology and good theology too, you don't ignore the bad theology. You don't pretend like everything is just hunky-dory and sure, let's go to this conference and do whatever, that's been made plain. I don't know how much plainer it can be made because of Strange Fire where MacArthur stands on even the most conservative charismatic or continuationist folks. That last chapter in the book is written to them but because Piper and Matt Chandler and whoever else might hold to an open stance on the gifts that way, because they do that, because they stop short of the craziness that is even mainstream charismaticism and because they do hold to a biblical gospel, we do need to partner with them in certain ways and I think the conference not being a local church, not being something that's officially ecclesiastical or under the authority of elders, I think that's rather the perfect opportunity to kind of say, "Yes, we do disagree." These things are important and yet we can be together for the gospel.

Phil: Yeah, and just to add to what Mike said, if you cannot make that distinction between inconsistent teaching or just bad doctrine and rank heresy, if you can't see the line of demarcation between two kinds of errors, then you will ultimately in very practical terms, you will ultimately become like that chain smoking discernment diva who doesn't go to church at all because she can't find a church that agrees with her on every single point.

Mike: If you were consistent, right now you've got to tune John MacArthur out, right? "There he goes. He's going to share the stage with that charismatic person who thinks God speaks with him so I can't be related to him anymore," and now where are you going to go? And what you wind up doing is you wind up putting yourself in the position, namely out of fellowship with Christ's people. That is the worst thing that can happen to somebody as evidenced by the Lord's declaration about church discipline. What is the thing that we do to people to hand them over to Satan, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5? We go through the steps: confront the brother with one person; go with two if he's not won; go to the church, if he's not won still; and then if he still refuses to hear the church, put him out, treat him as a tax collector or as if he was an unbeliever. Well, where is that person? Out of fellowship. If you sit there and you isolate yourself like a chain smoking discernment diva, you are effectively putting yourself under the chastening and discipline, the punishment, you're sending yourself to your room. That's not where blessing is. That's not where life and spiritual vitality is. That's not where communion with Christ is, Christ loves his bride. And if the problem is with everybody else, maybe the problem is with you, my friend.

Moderator: So, now that we've ended on a positive note. Alright, so I'm not the best moderator when it comes to this...

Mike: No, Paul did an excellent job.

Moderator: You guys could have been more positive.

Speaker: I'm positive that you're right about that.

Moderator: Again, thanks, I know, seriously, I know I'm going to hear it tomorrow or Sunday about you didn't get to my question and I know specifically a couple of them. Somebody is going to say it but we just don't have time. But seriously we do, I think it would be really neat to do this again on a Sunday morning with some of the other questions.

Phil: Do you want while it's fresh in our minds, do it again this Sunday morning?

Mike: Janna just asked me if she has to be there.

Phil: Yeah, just me and Mike. We'll finish up, alright?

Mike: One question that did get asked and yes, that's probably irrelevant to answer at the end here is somebody said, "You know, how do we just get a hold of you guys? Mike and Phil, how do we get a hold of you if we needed to chat with you."

Moderator: How did I miss that. I didn't even read the question because I thought it was good. It says, "Does it bother, distract you to be asked questions before you preach on Sunday mornings at Grace Life?"

Phil: I am glad you asked that.

Moderator: "What method of communication works best for you, personal contact with the flock? Phone, email, Facebook, etc." Thanks, Mike, that was...

Phil: Yeah, it doesn't bother me at all to be asked questions before Grace Life. In fact, I come early. I'm usually here at the latest by 8 o'clock. I stand in the back, back there and anybody who wants to can come and ask me any questions. What does bother me is when you wait until they're making the announcements and introducing the visitors and then you take me outside to ask me the question because then I miss the announcements and I miss all the visitors...

Darlene: And I miss something to tell him and then I'm in trouble.

Phil: And then she doesn't tell me. So, do it before Grace Life or after, either way, but you can also email me. My email is easy, it's phil@spurgeon.org My phone number is in the Grace Life directory, isn't it?

Darlene: Uh-huh, it was. It should be.

Phil: And I've never, ever complained about anybody calling me.

Speaker: That spurgeon.org one is better than the gty one, right?

Phil: gty one works as well. phil@gty.org

Mike: I would echo all of that. I'm happy to talk with you ahead of time. Janna reminds me that we don't get there as early as we probably should every Sunday morning so maybe we'll work on that. No, I'm very happy to hear from you and very happy to answer the questions that may have not gotten answered whether now or if we do it on Sunday, that don't get answered on Sunday. Yeah, email is really easy for me too. I'm riccardi@gracechurch.org if you need that. Come up and I'll give you a card of mine or something. I would love to hear from you. I would love to get together with you. Send me an email and say that you want to grab lunch one weekday. We love you and want to shepherd you and so please feel very free. You're not imposing on us. This is what we are called to do and it's a joy and pleasure for us.

Moderator: Thank you. Thanks for reminding me. That's a much better one to end on.

Gracious heavenly Father, we again come before you and we thank you. Thank you, Lord, for the leadership that you've given us. Thank you for Phil and for Mike. Thank you for their wives, God, we know how important it is to have godly wives. Lord, thank you just for the leadership of Grace Church and even as we talked about, for Pastor John. Lord, I would just pray for these men and for their wives, God, that they have much to be responsible for. Lord, the world even at large and the Christian world at large looks at these men and inspects them and does want to critique and criticize. Lord, we pray that you would just have your hand of blessing upon them. God, give them wisdom as they preach, give them wisdom as they interact with other pastors and with other believers. God, just keep them pure, keep them far from sin and temptation. Lord, again, thank you, God, for the privilege you've given us to sit under their teaching. Lord, we just pray that even our fellowship now would be sweet and would be pleasing to you and, God, that we would even look forward again to Sunday to coming back together and hearing your word proclaimed. God, we just ask all these things in your precious name. Amen.

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