

Ask Jeff 8.16.17

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Alright, here we go. I do want to encourage you, one of the sheets of paper that hopefully you picked up is titled "The Circle of Concerns." This is our prayer sheet. Those of you that are new to us, one of the ways that we communicate with each other about how to pray for each other this piece of paper every week. The way to get somebody or a situation on this is please contact us in the office and we will put somebody on as soon as you let us know. One of the things I want to call your attention, number 1 is this: do not throw this away. Put this in your Bible, tuck it away, put it in your purse, whatever. I want to encourage you to use this throughout the week to pray for folks that are either a part of our church, connected to our church, or in some way related to our church.

One of the things that you'll notice at the bottom of the first page is there are two sections, both a congratulations and a sympathy, those that are having children as well as those that have lost loved ones. And on the back, two sections that I always want to pay attention to or call attention to are those that are serving on the mission field and those that are serving in the military service. Just not that their prayer needs are of more value than others but I just want to call your attention that we're actively praying for those who are serving on behalf of the gospel as well on behalf of us, both stateside and across the sea.

So let's pray tonight and we'll get started.

Lord, as we gather in this place, Lord, we know that there's a lot of people that we love and we care for that are very near and dear to us, that they're not here tonight, many of them are sick and, Lord, we know that some of them don't know what's happening and so, Lord, we pray for wisdom not only in their lives but in the doctors and the nurses lives. Some of them have been fighting ailments for a very long time and they're discouraged and they're down and so, God, we pray that whether they're watching us live by way of multimedia or they're completely separated from us tonight, God, we do know that your Holy Spirit can be as rich with them in their lives as it can be with us tonight. God, we pray for those that are serving overseas and stateside both in the mission field and in the military that, Lord, for if there's discouragement, you would encourage, Lord, if there is loneliness, that you would fulfill and, Lord, if there is doubt, you would answer. God, we pray not only for them but we pray for us on this campus, Lord, as the students are getting back into the rhythm of things, as the children are beginning a new exciting adventure tonight, as the choir gets everything in order for the fall, God, we pray not

only for them but for us as we open your word, Lord, that you would guide us, you would teach us, you would instruct us so that when we depart from these grounds today wherever we've been, whatever we've been involved with, Lord, we'll look more like you when we do so. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Alright, crew, I want to welcome you to Wednesday nights here at First Baptist, Opelika, and I understand that many of you may be completely new to Wednesday nights here, not only here in the 316 Center but our campus wide, and some of you are seasoned veterans, so for those of you that are veterans, if you don't mind, just put up with me for a little bit. I want to kind of explain kind of how things are going to roll on Wednesday nights here now particularly as we're kicking in a new fall season.

On a typical Wednesday night here, we'll have our prayer time together, and then we'll have a Bible study that's going to be divided into two parts, we'll have what we call Ask Jeff on the first part and then we'll have a Bible study the second part. We're not going to so much go in the book of Revelation tonight, as you'll see, we have something special to discuss, but we are going to do the Q&A time. Speaking of the Q&A, it's entitled Ask Jeff. Now the reason that is because that's my name, but really it's not about what I know because I don't know anything, all I am is a conduit to the word of God. The entire purpose of Wednesday night is to allow you to ask the questions you want to ask about what the word of God has to say or how does the word of God answer the situations or questions in your life. I absolutely love Wednesday nights because it's what you want to talk about, it's what you want to deal with, it's what you may have doubts about or what you may be confused about.

Now if you want to submit a question, several ways you can do so. 1. You can go to the website, First Baptist website, you go to fbcopelika.com/askjeff and you can submit a question, okay? You can either go to askjeff.net and you could submit a question. You can go to the First Baptist app, you can go to the Ask Jeff app. There's four different electronic means out there of which you can go to submit a question. Now when you submit a question, if you put your email address, when the question is answered I have a little button that I can push that says "Answer." It will send you a link to the video just in case you were not here when it was answered so that in your absence your question was answered. However, understand if you put your email address, you still remain anonymous. Nobody knows who asked it. I don't know. Nobody knows. It's all electronically driven and that's what's wonderful about Wednesday night is you can remain anonymous. Maybe you're embarrassed by something, maybe you're curious but you don't want people to know you're curious. It's a wonderful means to submit a question and nobody knows that it is you.

Now my favorite part about Wednesday night is not the questions that come from the database, my favorite part is when you raise your hand. You see, when you raise your hand in the air, you have the ability to take Wednesday night wherever you want it to go. Now that means we go where you want to go but you lose your anonymity because we know who you are. But nonetheless, that's when it gets really fun. You have the right, you have the privilege to take it anyway you want. Sometimes people take it a little bit

deeper. Sometimes people say it has nothing to do with what we're talking about, I just want to talk about it. That's fine too.

Tonight is all about you and what you desire and what you want to study, but one thing I want to share with you before we get started is we look around in this room and don't get me wrong, this is an incredible group of people, an incredible campus on Wednesday nights, but I want you to understand that sometimes we get questions and you're saying, "Well, we talked about that several months ago, or that's come up in the past." The reason that is so is oftentimes we get questions from folks behind that camera back there. You may not realize this but there are actually more people who will watch Wednesday nights here by way of multimedia than will be here physically in person. In fact, I've got a little map I want to show you tonight. This is just a random Wednesday night we picked. This is where people are who were watching live while you were here on Wednesday night. Now if you were to expand on that map, each one of those little markers, it would show multiple IP addresses and etc., but we wanted you to see from coast to coast we have people, so sometimes people are submitting questions from California, sometimes they're submitting questions from Indiana, and so I just want you to know sometimes it can get a little frustrating because it's like, "Well, we've heard that question before, or a variation of that question." Sometimes we've got folks here that are for the very first time and they're not a veteran, or sometimes they're coming and they're from a long ways away and they're somewhat of a distance and they've just gotten connected to us.

Another thing I want to show you is how frequently this occurs. I've got an interesting graph to show you. This is the month of July, in the middle of the summer when we only met a few times. 7,500 times somebody sat down and participated in this Bible study. Now let me tell you what those numbers represent: it represents an IP, it represents a computer address. There might have been five people sitting there. There might have been 10, I don't know. But that averages out to once every five minutes.

Now the reason I share that with you is I want you to know that what we do here is exciting but we're just a small part of this. There are people all over the world and all over this country who are desperately seeking what does God's word say about these subject matters, and so I want to encourage you not just for our sake in here but for their sake out there, to engage and to interact. This is our opportunity to take the Bible study wherever we want to go.

Now when the questions are submitted, they go into a database, and by the way, some of you are not technologically savvy, you can fold a piece of paper, put it in my hand and that'll be just fine. I won't look at who gave it to me and I'll just hand it in and it will get put in the database. When it gets put in the database, it is completely arbitrary. It's an algorithm. There is no methodology to it. You could have submitted a question last night and it's the first one pulled tonight, or you could have submitted one 12 months ago and it still hasn't gotten pulled and you're thinking, "When are we going to get to it?" I don't know. I have no idea when we're going to get to it because it's completely random by way of the database. And so what I do is, I just click on a little database and I click on the

question. I have no idea what is coming because it doesn't tell me it's coming, it's just it's there.

So that being said, I thought tonight we'd begin with a little Q&A and then I've got some exciting information about the word of God in general. So remember, the question from the database typically comes from the website. You have the right to raise your hand and follow there.

So question number 1 tonight: it says how did the practice of genuflecting in the church develop and why is this not practiced in some Protestant denominations? Now some of you who've been Baptists your whole life are going, "Genu, what?"

Genuflecting is typically practiced in a Catholic tradition, a non-Protestant tradition, and it is the practice of when one comes into a worship center or when one comes into a worship environment where they will go to their knee and they will show what is a sign of not just humility but a sign of honor. This happens within what we would call the Catholic tradition when they walk into a worship facility. If you've ever been to a wedding of that tradition, anybody who is a part of that wedding party when they walk to the front, they will do so to the priest that is there. It is the act of lowering one's self and becoming humble to not only the persons there but to the place of which the worship is taking place.

Someone may ask, "Well, why does that happen there? Why doesn't it happen here? Why do we not participate in that?" And I've had people joke around about going to like a Catholic Mass wedding and say, "Man, all we did was go up and down, up and down, up and down, up and down." But the practice and I want you to hear my heart here, why is this done? Because within that worship tradition you have a very different perspective from our worship tradition. Now notice it said why do other Protestant denominations or why do Baptists not participate in this? Because, understand, number 1, I want you to understand kind of the role of the facility and then the role of the persons, and I'm going to utilize some things up here. I'm assuming and I hate to assume because you know what that does, I'm assuming most of you are familiar or have been inside of a worship facility that we would label as Catholic versus other denominations, but I'm just going to draw this out very simply. We're going to have a little, simple, rectangular building. Imagine we're looking at it from a bird's eye view and this up here is going to be the stage. On the stage, have you noticed what the primary item or furniture is? It is what we in the Baptist tradition would call the Lord's Supper table right here, right in the middle, correct? And on this table they'll have the chalices, they'll have the bread, the wine, etc. right there in the middle. When the priest gets up to communicate, to speak, to preach, you'll notice that the place of which he does it is over here on the side.

You say, "Well, why is that significant?" Because understand that in this tradition, it is the communion, it is the taking of the wine and the bread that is the central, what they would actually call a sacrament which means a means by installing grace or a means of receiving grace, and that grace doesn't happen with the preaching as much as it does here. And when this individual comes over here and they pray over the elements, I'm going to

give you a big word, those of you that like to play Scrabble, are you ready? They believe in what is called transubstantiation. That's six syllables, folks. That's impressive. That's a big old word. And what that means is they believe that when the priest prays over those items, it actually literally turns into the body and the blood of Jesus Christ, okay, and that that priest is the representative of Jesus Christ in that place.

So the genuflecting or the lowering of one's self, understand because of a belief in the sacraments, because of a belief in grace, because of a belief in grace through the sacraments and a belief of what the ability this guy has, when they come in and they pay honor, they pay homage because they're viewing him and they're viewing this place in a very elevated position.

Now let me transition to a "Baptist church," or Protestant, generally speaking. What's in the center? A pulpit. Now I know what some of you are thinking, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, we don't have a pulpit here. Jeff, you don't use a pulpit." Did you know the word "pulpit" is only used one time in the Bible? It's in the book of Nehemiah 9 and it says that Ezra stood on the pulpit, not behind the pulpit. So technically a pulpit is just an elevated place, and in the tradition such as First Baptist and many other Protestant denominations, you've got a pulpit that is in the middle because it is the proclamation of the word that is the central point. And yes, you'll have the Lord's Supper taken on occasions, yes, you may have a table there in the front, but it is not the central piece. In a Protestant, particularly Baptist tradition, the word of God is the central piece. In a Catholic tradition, the communion table is the central piece and the genuflecting or the lowering of one's self is to pay honor to either the A, the individual, or to the items that are in that place because both of them, listen, have the means in their belief to bestow grace. I've got news for you: I don't have that ability. I don't have the ability to bestow grace, only Jesus Christ does.

So therefore that is not practiced in our tradition. Why? Why would you lower yourself in front of me? You're going to have to get real low because I'm not real up there, if you know what I mean. But secondly, there's no reason to because I'm not the giver of grace. I'm not the one who can pray and turn something into something that can give grace. Do you understand where I'm going with this? And so that practice of genuflecting is to recognize the means of grace and the one who can make that happen, whereas, as I believe you see the scripture laid out, it's only Jesus Christ that can do that.

Now I've got biblical evidence for this. In the book of Revelation 1, the Apostle John sees Jesus Christ. Do you remember the picture? His hair is white, he's got a two-edged sword coming out of his mouth, his feet are as brass. Do you remember what John does in his presence? He falls prostrate. He literally genuflects, to use that term, in his presence. Later on in the book of Revelation, there's going to be an angel that shows up and the Apostle John is so amazed at his presence, he falls at his feet. Do you remember what the angel does? He says, "Get up. Don't do that to me. I'm not the Lord." And so what I would advocate is the only one worthy of bowing down to is the Lord himself, not a representative of but himself. So that's why it is not practiced in the non-Catholic traditions, particularly in what we know as the Baptist tradition.

Any other questions about that, concerns, issues, thoughts, what-abouts? Okay. Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Okay, so the question is, allow me to repeat the question, the question is, okay, so I'm sitting onstage, yes, and things, attention is somewhat directed over here, that's why I'm sweating and you're not, and I recognize that. And by the way, those of you, if you haven't noticed on Sunday morning, we have 4,000 watts of lights in our worship center and so it doesn't matter how cold we get the building, I just sweat. That's all I do the whole time. But you're absolutely correct, and so there is even in our tradition, there may be a single focus, and as you shared, in the early church there was, as we see, a tradition of just gathering and just sharing and just know, nothing wrong with that. However, I would encourage as you read through not only the last part of the book of Acts but as you read through the letters to Timothy, what we call the pastoral epistles. The pastoral epistles are 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, where really the Apostle Paul, who by the way, is in prison, is at the end of his life, he's giving instruction to those who are overseeing or guiding the church. He says in every one of those situations that leaders were appointed, apt to teach and to give and to serve, that were to expound the word of God. Absolutely nothing wrong with a group of people gathered around a table sharing the word of God with each other. There's nothing less or more valuable than we standing up here because and here's the thing I think is important, this is what's important, the word of God, not the person.

Now the Bible does talk about various churches. You have the church at Corinth, the church at Thessalonica, etc., who all had pastors. According to Ephesians 4, they had pastors and teachers and leaders who hopefully, I hate saying this, hopefully were gifted in the ability of doing so but also responsible as the book of James says, "Be careful about being a teacher because you're going to be held to a higher standard and level in your life." So I would not say that just because somebody is up here they are more important than or more valuable than, it's this and one's ability to expound and teach.

Does that help at all? Maybe? A little bit?

[unintelligible]

Yeah, he said that's talked about in different circles online, that whole world "online" is what scares me. There are so many opinions on the internet. There's a world that people listen to and can I warn you about listening to some of the people that are out there?

[unintelligible]

No, I don't mean just in this area, I mean....

[unintelligible]

I know you're an educated man, that's not the point, the point is does what they say communicate with and line up with the word of God or is it just their tradition or their opinion?

[unintelligible]

Oh, sure, absolutely, and I want to encourage you to engage whether they're "biblical" or not. Yes, I love the engaging. I guess just as a blanket statement, I always, I get concerned about several things: people who learn the Bible from the History Channel and people that think truth is on the internet because there's a lot of stuff out there. This is my description of it, to your point, sir. Imagine that you've got the best filet mignon you could imagine, I mean, just the most incredible steak. It smells good, you know it's going to taste good but it's covered in three pounds of asparagus. Now some of you like asparagus. I don't. If it's green, I'm not into it, I'm just going to be honest with you, alright? So pick whatever you don't like. Sometimes you've got to filter through all that stuff to get to the good stuff, and there's nothing wrong with that, I just want to advocate wisdom and discernment and my whole point of not only Wednesday night but my whole point of anytime we gather is what does the word of God say. My life, your life, all of our lives are to line up with what he says, not what tradition says, not what they say, we say, somebody says, but what does the word of God say which goes back to this importance here. I believe the word of God advocates the centrality of the scripture, not the centrality of a man. That's not Jesus.

Does that help at all? A little bit? Not really?

[unintelligible]

Okay. You good? We're good? Anybody? Did I see another hand? I thought I did. Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Ah, that is a great question. The question is why do we, and that's us here at First Baptist, why do we not have communion or the Lord's Supper every week? I'm glad you asked for multiple reasons, let me tell you why. This is the year 2017. We are celebrating the 500th anniversary of what we know as the Reformation, 500 years ago everything changed because prior to 1517, everybody was this, after 1517 on October 31 when Martin Luther went to the church at Wittenberg, Germany and he put those 95 theses on it, it changed everything, okay? Now when that happened, okay, understand the guys who led kind of that march, they weren't perfect, don't get me wrong, and to be honest if you begin to study the guys who led what we know as the Reformation, they weren't trying to leave the Catholic Church, they were trying to change the Catholic Church. In fact, if you read Martin Luther's 95 theses, what he was so upset about was indulgences, okay? An indulgence is either paying for or asking for forgiveness of a sin in advance. In other words, it's Friday afternoon and, boy, I'm going to live it up this weekend. I'm going to pay some money so I don't feel guilty about it, okay? Obviously I think we would all

agree that that's not scriptural at all, okay? And so that was what he was so upset about, and so what he wanted was what we know as the entity to change. As we know through history, it wasn't willing to change as a whole, and so therefore there was a breakaway from.

You say, "What does that have to do with my question?" Well, in that process, one of the things they began to do was refocus why they did what they did. In the Catholic tradition, the reason that communion is taken every week is because it was a sacrament, a means of installing grace. So in other words, if you've sinned, if you've messed up, if you need forgiveness, you have to participate in this. The message that was being taught after 1517 was, no, that happens through Jesus Christ. It's not through bread and wine, it's through the blood of Jesus. And so therefore it's not a necessity for grace or a necessity for salvation, it is what 1 Corinthians 11 calls it, it is a memorial, it is a remembrance of, right?

Well, in that tradition, I mentioned that big word transubstantiation was the belief that the elements actually become the body and the blood. There was an individual who was a part of all that Reformation stuff who's by the name of Ulrich Zwingli, okay? Ulrich Zwingli was a cohort of Martin Luther. They were buddies. They split on some differences and then they came back together. That's a whole long history lesson there. But Ulrich Zwingli is really the reason why we do what we do the way that we do it because Ulrich Zwingli was concerned that if what we know as the Lord's Supper was done every week, then those who were coming out of that false tradition would never make the transfer that the focus is on Jesus, not on these elements, but it needed to be enough to where we remember the Lord's death because it says when you gather to do so, do so until he returns. So Ulrich Zwingli in the 16th century, I guess just arbitrarily, I don't know, decided that it would be a really good idea to celebrate it four times a year. It's enough to make it important but not so frequent that we go back to the way that we thought erroneously.

Now in a lot of Protestant traditions, that is the case. There is nothing in the Bible that says how often, it just says as often as you meet, is what it says. I know folks that are at a church that they practice it every week, and they practice it with the right attitude and the right spirit. I know folks that practice it once or twice a year, okay? Typically here at First Baptist we're four to five times a year. And so there is no magic number but the reason that it was relegated to a sparing event versus a regular event initially was so that the focus would be on the person of Jesus and not this idea of transubstantiation that the elements are the means of grace but that Jesus is the means of grace.

Does that help out there? A little history lesson. By the way, can I give a shameless plug? On Sunday, October 29, which is two days obviously before the 31st, 500th anniversary, we're actually in the worship center that night we're going to show the movie entitled "Luther." It's the history of his life, the Reformation. A great opportunity. It's one of the best movies I've ever seen historically speaking about the Reformation and his life. A wonderful opportunity. Just go ahead and share with that in advance. So Sunday night, October 29 we're going to be watching "Luther."

Hopefully that helped that question a little bit? Anybody else on this? Yes, ma'am. This is why I love Wednesday night because I have no idea what you are going to go with. Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

The question, oh boy, um, some of y'all heard the question and know why I said oh, boy. The question is there are individuals today who obtain the name priest, who feel they have the ability to forgive people of their sins. Knowing the fact that Hebrews 7 says that Jesus is the high priest, okay, and he is the only one, in fact, when you read chapter 7 and chapter 10 of the book, just because of this, go ahead and go to Hebrews 7 real quick, beginning in verse 21. I want you to see, I don't want you to hear Jeff, I want you to hear Hebrews 7 because I think it answers your question very explicitly and then we're going to talk about it.

Hebrews 7. I'm going to begin in verse 11 here in a minute and then we're going to go to chapter 10 and we're going to go to verse 19. So we're going to read several verses. Chapter 7, verse 23. I'm sorry, verse 23. Actually I'll back up in verse 22. "22 By so much as Jesus made a surety of a better testament. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this man," that's Jesus, "because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself." So in other words, making it very clear, Jesus is the only one who can be the intermediary on our behalf. Now turn the page to chapter 10. We're going to see the same thing. It says in verse 19, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God."

And so I think what is critical in the book of Hebrews because the word Hebrew is referring to the Old Testament, there is this wonderful comparison of the way that humanity did it by the priest going in on the Day of Atonement or even on a regular basis, and Jesus having gone and shed his blood once, there is no more reason for a human intermediary, someone to go on behalf. So to your question, those who believe that they're capable, those that believe they are of that capacity, I cannot speak on their behalf but I would be absolutely frightened if I took it upon myself and I believed that I was able to play the role of God in your life, because that is essentially what is taking place. You need forgiveness, I can give it to you. You need repentance, I will offer it. Does that make sense? And that's what you're seeing. If you, to this picture, if you need salvation, I will pray so that it will take place. That's a position not only do I not find biblical but I would never want to find myself in it.

So you said, you know, are they going to be held in a higher accountability? I would think so because they're basically assuming a role that is for Jesus Christ alone. I'm not going to go there, if that makes any sense.

Does that help at all?

[unintelligible]

For those of you that are new, this is why Wednesday night is so much fun. The question is how can you be born again and believe that stuff? I don't know. I'm going to relegate to John 5:20 that says all judgment is left up to Jesus. Now can I be honest with you? I struggle with that myself. I look at that picture of a priest as one who believes he can give grace, okay? I struggle with how can you truly understand Jesus if you think you have the same capacity, I get that, but also I would also say I don't know a person's heart, if that makes any sense, and so I'm with you, I'm just glad it's Jesus' job and not mine, if that makes any sense.

[unintelligible]

I understand. So, excuse me?

[unintelligible]

And by the way, John 17, what we call the high priestly prayer of Jesus, he makes the reference in there, he calls the Father holy Father. You know, when someone takes on the title reserved for God alone, that makes me a little nervous, you know?

Now to your question, sir, in the scriptures we hear terms pastors, ministers, teachers, elders, etc., those are all terms God gave to humans who participated in various roles. Those humans were never given, in my opinion, scripturally the freedom to take on the titles reserved for God, if that makes sense. In fact, you go to 2 Timothy, I'm sorry, 1 Timothy 2:5 and it says there's only one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. There's only one. I don't have that capacity and nobody else does either.

Any other one on that one? Woo, we having fun now. Y'all good? I told you, when we started feeding y'all, I knew it would get good on Wednesday night. I just knew it would get good. So anybody else on that one? That's fine? Okay. Great okay. Moving onwards.

Here we go. At Cana, did Jesus dip the wine out of the pots or draw it out of the well?

Okay, go to John 2. This is the first miracle of Jesus. The first miracle and we have, we know this famous story of Jesus turning water into wine. It's his first miracle, alright? And that's actually a really good question because it's based on verses 7 and 8. I'm going to read the whole context here so we get the whole picture. It says, "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the

mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." By the way, that's a great sermon that Mary preaches, "Whatever he says, do it." "And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece." Let me translate that, that's about 128 gallons total. Okay, that's a lot. It says, this is the question, "Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it."

So the question was, you know, the means by which this now wine was given to the people that were there at the wedding. The way that I see it and the way that I read it is he personally was not the one dipping the now wine out, he gave those who filled it the instructions to do so, which is interesting because you see in the life and the ministry of Jesus that it was his disciples that were baptizing, it was his disciples that he sent out two by two, it was these individuals who he said, "Draw now from the wine." And so he personally was not the one who was dipping out of but those that filled them up were the ones that were instructed to draw out and give to the crowd that was there.

So very simple illustration there. Anything on Jesus turning water into wine? We're good? That's a pretty simple one. I appreciate that whoever put that one in there. That made life a lot easier tonight. Moving onward. Hold on, it's coming, it's coming.

Alright, here we go, it says could you please, oh boy, could you please explain the difference between Southern Baptist and Reformed Baptist fellowships?

Well, here's the problem with that question, there's some Southern Baptists that are Reformed. You know the old joke when you get two Baptists, you get three opinions? Have you ever heard that one? In light of the fact that we had a question about the Reformation earlier, allow me to do my best. What we know as the Protestant Reformation started technically in 1517. From that point forward, there was all kinds of discussion and debate and all kinds of ideas and ideologies and philosophies and theologies and what we know, that term Southern Baptist, okay, which by the way, you're a part of officially a Southern Baptist church, we did not exist until 1845, okay? We've only been around since 1845. So what we know as the Protestant Reformation was around for 350 years before we even showed up, so to speak, okay? The idea or the concept of Reformed Baptists is that is a "Baptist church" that has more of a leaning toward or more of an adherence to what oftentimes we call Reformed theology which is a theology that is generally speaking, okay, don't hold hard and fast here, generally speaking based on the concepts and the teachings from the early 1600s, sometimes we call it Calvinism based on John Calvin and his teachings, a synod that took place there where they came up with these concepts of total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, preservation of the saints.

Reformed theology as a whole here understand, I get nervous when I get questions about Baptists because we're all so different, okay? As a whole, Reformed theology tends to

lean more toward concepts and ideas, we call it Reformed but more of what we hear ideas of like predestination and those type of terms. Southern Baptists have everything under their umbrella, do you understand that? That there is no one type of Southern Baptist, okay? There's all kinds of Southern Baptists. There are Reformed Southern Baptists. There are Arminian Southern Baptists. There are they don't even know what they believe Southern Baptists, okay? But when you hear that term Reformed, it has a tendency to lean toward those concepts discovered in and expounded in the early 1600s typically under names such as John Calvin, concepts known as predestination, more of a focus on that and those terminologies, okay?

So please hear me clearly: this church is a Southern Baptist church and there's every shade of Baptist in the building. I promise you that, okay? And so there is a difference but you can also have one contained within the other. Southern Baptists as a whole, and understand 170 some odd years ago, when we were established, we were established really for two purposes: for missions and evangelism. That's why we were established and so oftentimes we have discussions theologically do we lean this way, do we lean that way, but since 1845 primarily Southern Baptists were based on missions and evangelism. However, there are various fellowships, various churches, and one of the things that I appreciate about being a Southern Baptist is we believe in the autonomy of a local church, meaning some local churches may lean more Reformed, some local churches may not lean so much Reformed, some local churches may lean a little more toward this, or lean a little more toward that, but at the end of the day, the exclusivity of Jesus Christ alone for salvation, the truth of God's word as the guide for our life in sanctification should be the core for all perspectives. I like to call them the panels on the umbrella, so to speak. There's all kinds of various panels on the umbrella that you could put the Baptist name across.

Does that help anybody at all? Maybe not? Maybe a little? I saw some confused faces there. Everybody's good? Everybody's scared to raise their hand now? Uh-oh, yes, ma'am. I know you're not scared but you realize this is number 2? Go for it.

[unintelligible]

Yeah, Southern Baptists, we started, now I will give us a little credit, we got started as close to heaven as we could. We started in Augusta, Georgia where the Masters is played. That's close. Understand Southern Baptists originally there was one "Baptist" in America, there was American Baptist, okay? So the Southern Baptists were a break-off of and primarily found in the south, and let's just call it what it is, okay? What we know as the Southern Baptist Convention in the American Baptist Convention pre-1845, they had a rule that you could not go as a missionary if you or anybody related to you was a slave owner, okay? The Southern Baptist Convention was established because you're in the south and we all know that was a pretty major issue in the south in those days, that they did not allow slave owners to go to the mission field but if your dad, your brother, your uncle, your cousin was one, they did not punish you if you were not. Does that make sense?

So the Southern Baptists, if we're just going to call it what it is, we were established to allow people who were related to slave owners but did not own them themselves to go on the mission field. There it is, folks. There's the true history right there. That's what it is. Many people have said it's a denomination that was based on slavery, not based on but a response to absolutely. It is what it is, okay? So but that being stated, obviously in the early days the south geographically is where they were based, yes. We now have Southern Baptist churches, there are some in Minnesota, there's some in Michigan, there's some in Europe, okay? You say, "Well, what makes a Southern Baptist church?" It really has nothing to do with geography. In fact, if you go look up the beliefs of a Southern Baptist church, you know, essentially it is who is Jesus, who is the Bible, the Holy Spirit, etc., and if you adhere to these specific belief systems, if you willingly choose so, you can identify with us and come with us and do missions, etc., if that makes sense. So Southern Baptist is more of a belief structure than it is a geographical location.

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Excuse me?

[unintelligible]

We're online.

[unintelligible]

Oh yes, yes, so we are worldwide because we're online. You're absolutely right, there you go. That's a great explanation there, but as far as the physical church structure....

[unintelligible]

Okay, it's all good. I appreciate that. But, you know, I've been on the other side of the world, I've been on the continent of Asia and I've preached in a Southern Baptist church in Asia, you know? So understand, though, Southern Baptists, don't think geography, think adherence to theological positions, if that makes any sense.

And so to the previous question about Southern Baptist versus Reformed, there are Reformed Baptists that are Southern Baptists, you know? I'm saying that umbrella has various panels there. Don't think geographical. Now I will tell you up until probably about 40 years ago, it was real hard to find a Southern Baptist church outside of the south, you know, but now a lot in California, a lot in Arizona, a lot in Nevada, and understand and I know you know this but I'm going to just repeat for the sake of all of us, it really, what's on the door is not as important as what is believed and taught, if that makes sense. I've been in places in the world where when I've gone on mission trips, don't panic, we worked with the Methodists, not the Baptists, because the Baptists weren't worth working with. Just going to be honest with you. They were. They may have had the

same name we did but they weren't doing missions and evangelism. So oftentimes I think we get hung up on the name when the name, in essence, should communicate a certain set of beliefs, they don't always adhere to them.

So does that help question 2 tonight? You good? I won't let you do number 3. Yes, ma'am. No, maybe later. Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Yes.

[unintelligible]

Yes.

[unintelligible]

Yes, okay, so somebody had to bring that up. Going back...no, I'm kidding. Going back to the original question of the Catholic priest. So John 20:21-23, Jesus pulls the apostles aside, correct? And he says, "Whomever sins you remit shall be remitted, whoever you retain shall be retained." Did I quote that pretty good? Close? Not really?

[unintelligible]

Yeah, correct, okay, therein lies a, forgive me for saying this, kind of a very long syntactical discussion of remittance versus forgiveness. The word "remit" and some of your Bibles will use the word "remit, whoever's sins your remit." To remit means to not acknowledge. To forgive means to acknowledge and absolve, if that makes sense. So in other words, I don't want to pick on you but I'm going to, but if you do something horrible toward me, I don't know what it would be, forgive me for even using this example, it is done, it happens and I forgive you, I've acknowledged that transgression, I've acknowledged that sin and I've said, "I forgive you." Which by the way, just because I forgive you has nothing to do with your standing with you and God. That's just between you and I, you know that, okay? To remit is to say it didn't happen. It just didn't happen, okay?

So let me give you a good example of this. Interesting story. Acts 8, Stephen is the first Christian martyr, right? Notice what he says, he says, "Do not hold this against them." He doesn't say forgive them. He says, "Do not hold this against them." To me, that's a perfect example of what's happening in John 20 when the Lord says, "Whoever sins will be remitted or not held against, if you ask for it, it will be done." And so I think a good example is the martyrdom of Stephen when he says, "Do not hold it against them." Here's the difference. Jesus on the cross says, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they've done." He has the ability, obviously, to do so. In, allow me to say this, in a human priestly tradition, that verse is utilized to say, "Hey, these guys had the ability to either forgive or not forgive, so we do as well," obviously believing the tradition of apostleship,

etc. I take case with that, the difference between not acknowledging, I hate to use the term not acknowledging, but not allowing to go on the record versus actually absolving of the transgression.

Does that make sense? Does that communicate? And I understand different versions out there, some say forgive, some say remit. I get all that but if you start to dig down, you're going to see there's nuances, there's different words there and Stephen uses the same concept in Acts 8 to say, "Do not hold it against them." In other words, it's almost as if he's saying, "If there's anyway, God, we can just act like they never did this," if that makes any sense.

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Yes, more of a personal but a priestly tradition would take that more as a corporate concept, that they have the ability to or not to bestow forgiveness which is why there's items such as confession and there's items such as penance and whatever a person says to do, you must do to receive the forgiveness that's necessary. Now I will state this very clearly, I think you see ample scriptures even all the way back in the book of James 5, one another, to use that illustration, we need to seek forgiveness of one another but whether I do or don't forgive you does not necessitate whether God forgives you. In the "priestly tradition," I have the ability to determine whether God forgives you or not, if that makes sense.

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Yes.

[unintelligible]

They're meeting in the locker room. That's a guy that asked that question. I like that.

[unintelligible]

Yes.

[unintelligible]

Yes.

[unintelligible]

Yes.

[unintelligible]

Okay, okay, understand, allow me to go here. The New Living translation is a paraphrase, okay? A paraphrase puts it in words to convey a thought or an idea. It's not the literalness of what that word means, it's a concept, it's an idea, it's a paraphrase. Does that make sense? And one of the bad things about paraphrases is it communicates concepts that we grasp but it may not be the concept of the word that was actually used. Does that make any sense? Do you know what I'm saying? It's not a literal this word just means this even though it's hard to understand or grasp or whatever, it's conveying a concept and therein lies where I struggle at times. Our concept of forgiveness as a holistic word means I can establish a right relationship therein or not. Where do you see anywhere in the book of Acts that any of the apostles went to anybody and said, "I declare you innocent before God because I've forgiven you"? Nowhere. In fact, in Acts 3 which is about 2-3 months after this case, there's a guy by the wayside that's begging and he's begging for money and he says, "Money I have none but Jesus I will preach unto you." They never forgave. You never hear of any of the disciples say, "Because I'm a disciple, because I'm an apostle, I forgive you therefore you're in a right relationship with God." They pointed them to Jesus as the author and finisher of their faith.

Does that make sense? So in that context of the big big big picture there, I don't want to get into all the syntax stuff, but in the big picture I don't see any of the apostles acting in a priestly tradition of, "Come to me and I will see if you're now right with God." You go to God personally.

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Oh yeah.

[unintelligible]

That's right, it was a big deal and be clear because this concept of tonight has kind of gone this way, whether it is a person who has a title of a priest, title of a pastor, title of anything, hear me clearly, Jesus said, John 14:6, there's no other way to the Father but by me. He's the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus is the means of forgiveness. Jesus is the means of salvation. I'm not. You're not. Nobody is. Jesus Christ alone.

And I think to your point, sir, the locker room, by the way, I love the locker room concept, I like that, I think you see that testimony in the book of Acts and in all Paul's writings pointing people to Jesus, not pointing people to the apostles for their standing with God.

Alright, go ahead. One more and then we'll transition.

[unintelligible]

Oh yes, yeah, you confess your sin one to another, absolutely. Matthew 18 talks about it, James 5, but that's our relationship together, you and me. But let's, I mean, I used her as a horrible illustration and I feel guilty about it, but whether I forgive her or not does not establish how she stands before God.

[unintelligible]

That is correct. So we have the right in a horizontal relationship, only he has the ability in a vertical one.

Alright, transition. There's another piece of paper that you've got that has a big yellow and black word at the top called AWANA. Alright, we're not doing a Revelation study tonight because I want to communicate very hopefully clearly something I think that's exciting that's happening on our campus. Many of your kids are involved in this and I just want you to know what is happening and what is going on in this campus and how, if God allows, that you would be willing to participate. Starting tonight from the littlest ones we've got up through sixth grade, begun a new focus emphasis via our children's ministry entitled AWANA. Some of you are familiar with this, some of you are not. Excuse me? Oh, it stands for approved workmen are not ashamed based on 2 Timothy 2:15, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Now when I say why do we need this, please don't interpret that any reflection on anything that's ever happened in the past at First Baptist, but why would we start this, if that makes any sense, okay? Here are the issues that I want to share with you. These are statistics that are commonly known. These are among the national average and among those young people who participate in this weekly Bible study known as AWANA. How many of them trust the Bible as God's word? National average of young people through sixth grade is 58%. Those who participate in the AWANA Bible study is 94%. Now that number is a little skewed because you realize those 94 are also in the 58 so it actually makes it a little better there. Those that attend church regularly, national average, 36%, AWANA alumni, 93%. Read scripture regularly, 17% versus 61%. Serve in a local church, 15% versus 74%. In other words, you see a higher level of interest in the things of God, scripture, a local body of believers in those that are participating versus those who are just out in the world.

Now what does that look like? This is working from the youngest to the oldest. I just think these are the cutest names, that's why I give them to you. We've got Puggles, Cubbies, Sparks, and then the older kids are Truth in Training. So if you see a lot of kids running around campus that have like little cubbies, like little bears on them, like, "Why do we have little teddy bears everywhere?" Well, they're Cubbies. That's what they do. And the Puggles are just the cutest, they really are. They're the cutest. They're the preschoolers and they're cute down there. So we go Puggles all the way to Truth in Training, fifth and sixth grade.

How does it work? They learn, I mean, you would hope that this would happen, they'd learn respect for God's word, build a biblical knowledge and a base, learn how to live in God's grace and share with others, and learn to follow the will and the call of God. And the most important part is 100% of those participating will hear the gospel of Jesus Christ on a regular basis.

I come today not just as the pastor but as a parent. In years past, all three of my children have had the opportunity at some level to participate in these various stages, and just kind of give you an idea of what this looks like because you're going to begin to see this on our campus and some of you are about to see this in your home, is there's a workbook and in that workbook every week, and you don't have to do one per week, some students are very gregarious and do 3-4 per week, some maybe do 2-3 all year just depending on stage of life, etc., is there is a Bible study and a challenge – listen to this – to memorize and to learn the word of God and that is the ultimate goal, to do what Psalm 119 says, to take the word of God and to place it in their hearts. And as they go through those books that are set at the stage and the age of which they are, the length of the verses, the difficulty of the verses, if a young person starts all the way at the bottom and goes all the way to the top, they literally can learn in excess of 800 Bible verses if they go all the way through. I will tell you that when you get a young person who's actively involved in this on our Wednesday nights, you give them about 3-4 months and they will out-quote any of us adults when it comes to the word of God.

So I want to show you a quick little video about what this kind of, this is just a little one minute video and then I'm going to talk about how we as a church can really be active in these young people's lives. So quick little video coming up right here.

[unintelligible]

That's a word you're going to see around our campus a lot particularly as we go through Wednesday after Wednesday. I wanted some of you to know what that was. Some of you have seen this around on advertising and go, "I don't even know what that is." Basically what this is, it is a Wednesday night Bible centric structure for our young people to teach them the word of God, to help them memorize the word of God, and hopefully to live out the word of God.

Now many of you have students that are participating already. Some of you are saying, "Well, I don't have students in my home anymore. I don't have kids in my home." This brings neighbors, friends, whatever, we would encourage you it's a wonderful environment to bring anybody anytime to be a part of so that they could have the Bible be the focus and the central part of their life.

Now how do you participate as an adult? Let me just be completely honest and transparent with you, I think it's a wonderful endeavor to participate and here's why. What we do here on Wednesday night in this room, you can get it on the internet, 7,500 times in the month of July alone. So this can be done. Now you can't raise your hand by

way of the internet if you're watching later, I realize that, but you can't interact with those children once they leave this campus. You can get this later.

So I mean this seriously, if the Lord compels you to go and serve in that area, I'm not going to be upset if chairs are empty in here. The highest level of serving is being kind of a facilitator, teacher. That does require a little bit of homework, that does require a little bit of preparation as far as participating in the curriculum. At the lowest level and I think this is the exciting level, are what we call listeners. A listener is someone who goes in at a very strategic time and listens to young people quote their Bible verses. Maybe one a week, sometimes 2-3 a week. The only role, the only thing you have to do is show up. The book they hand to you, you open it to the right page, and you see if they quote the proper verse. It does not require advanced training. It does not require you to know the verse. You don't have to have it memorized and you don't have to do any advance preparation for it, you just have to be there on time in the right place, okay? That being said, there are spots available for teachers, there's spots available for listeners. The listeners are only needed for 30 minutes based on the age of which you would be listening for. So in other words, the youngest kids are at the early part, the oldest kids at the older part.

Now remember, on a regular Wednesday night starting next Wednesday, the first half is Ask Jeff, second half is going to be our Bible study. Those of you that just love the Q&A that say, "Man, I'd love to serve in AWANA," come in here for the Q&A then after 30 minutes, go upstairs and help young people learn the Bible verse. Or vice versa, some of you say, "Man, I just really don't like that Q&A stuff." Fine, miss out on the first part, come to the Bible study and help, or you can volunteer to listen the whole time. We just want you to know that there is availability and it's a valuable opportunity to help young people learn the word of God in their life.

You'll notice at the bottom of the sheet there is an email that you can submit to, that you can say, "Hey, I'd love to be a part of things." Or you can find one of us or talk to Taylor T., or anybody here who's on staff, but I just want to encourage you that if you want to participate at some level, a valuable ministry starting tonight on our campus to get the word of God into young people's lives, and as the parent of some AWANA alumni, incredible how well they can retain the word of God and how excited they can become about learning the word of God. And here's one advantage, you might just learn the verses too when you're helping them out.

So that being said, you can email Miss. L. If you have any questions about what does this really mean, Jeff didn't explain it well, feel free to email them, feel free to call. But I just wanted you to feel the freedom if you want to participate and if you want to help young people, please understand that what we do here on Wednesday night you can get on the internet but you cannot get that interaction with the young people on the internet.

So let's pray and we'll go pick up our kids.

Lord Jesus, as we leave from this place, Lord, we do pray that your word would not just be the central focus of the young people's lives but it would be the central focus of our lives. And Lord, you've challenged us, you've challenged us to look at our lives, you've challenged us to look around us, you've challenged us to look at what your word says, and God, I pray that someone, someday tonight you've equipped us Ephesians 4:12 says to be the saints for the work and the purpose of ministry. So God, as we depart from this place and in these chairs, may we be your feet, may we be your hands, Lord, if willing may we be your mouthpiece to proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the entire world. It is in his name we pray. Amen.

God bless. Go get your kids, please.