

# You Can Think You Are Saved and Not Be

Steve Morgan | Small Group Leader Retreat Session 1, March 30, 2012 at Camp Camby in Camby, Indiana

1

1 **Steve Morgan:**

2 [(0:00)]

3 Hey, good evening. I think somebody will give us some lights. And glad that you're here.

4 Thank you for the nice weather. I love it. We are moles in Seattle. We live most of the  
5 year in utter darkness. My eyes have gotten smaller, did you notice? No light to shine on  
6 us there.

7 It's been crazy. You guys have had the warmest, crazy winter, and we have had the same  
8 winter as always, endless rain and dark.

9 So it's not hardly fair, but we'll get ours in the end.

10 So Jesus will give us more reward because we survived Seattle.

11 It's good to be with you. I can never be back here without being a little bit overwhelmed  
12 by what God has done. It just overwhelms me.

13 I mean, every time I think about what it means that this, you're the small group leaders of  
14 five churches.

15 And, you know, we started with Vine with six of us sitting in a living room in our rental  
16 house. and it's just amazing to watch what he's done.

17 High Rock's been planted, you know, up and going, just over 200 people. Brookfield's  
18 been planted. They're up and going. They're over 100 people. Amazing.

19 City Lights is actually flourishing in a way that has never happened in that very difficult  
20 city where Jesus has placed them.

21 And wonderful, the growth that they're experiencing there. Clear River and Clear View,  
22 both just over or approaching 500 people.

23 And that means I'm all over Jeff and Tony about the first church plant out of those places.

24 And Blue Sky, not 500 yet, but we are planting our first church.

25 And so, yeah, this summer.

26 So the plan was next summer, and about a month ago, not much more than that, maybe  
27 five weeks ago now, we had a network planning day, and Jesus just spoke very, very  
28 clearly that we were to do it and do it now.

29 Ern Menocal, who...It's so funny what Jesus has done with him. Amazing.

30 When we left to plant Blue Sky, and Jesus told me he was going to...

31 What he told me originally was he was going to be my Sándor. in planting Blue Sky.

32 And he's been that amazingly, the way that he's served.

33 And we really thought, and Ern had thought, he's never going to plant a church.

34 He came in after we did a church planter training week, stuck his head in my office and  
35 said, Steve, I think you ought to just take me off the potential church planter list.

36 I'm not supposed to plant a church, I'm pretty confident.

37 And I said, good, that means he's at Blue Sky the rest of his life, and I like that.

38 And Jesus just spoke so clearly, no, it was Ern that was supposed to go.

39 He and Laura have sold their house already.They've only known for four weeks.

40 We announced it to the church at our last team meeting three weeks ago.

41 We have a team right now of 21 people, but we're still gathering. I think we'll end up  
42 about 25 to 30, something in there.

43 Ern will be done in our office in May, May 15th or so, and be working full-time in the  
44 plant, and they move in July.

45 So isn't that amazing? We're so excited about it.

46 They're going to Pullman, Washington.

47 It's the opposite side of the state from us.

48 They actually have sunshine there, and they have cold winters and much less rain.

49 And he's going to be at Washington State University and about five miles from  
50 University of Idaho.

51 It's right on the border of Idaho, and there's two universities right side by side there.

52 And so we're excited about it.

53 And that will be eight churches in the network.

54 So it's fun to see what Jesus is doing.

55 Well, we're going to be talking over the weekend about inviting people to Jesus and how  
56 that happens and looking at the Bible on it and what do you as small group leaders do in  
57 that process.

58 Tonight, I want to give you a summary of good biblical doctrine on how salvation  
59 happens.

60 What does the Bible say about it?

61 I'm not going to do a systematic theology approach where I try to pull together all of the  
62 Bible on this topic. but I'm going to use a text or a couple of texts to talk through that and  
63 what does it mean about how we see our job of declaring Jesus to people.

64 [(5:10)]

65 Tomorrow morning, Luke Williams, one of our pastors from Blue Sky, is going to be  
66 talking with us about how you as a group leader recognize where a person is in the  
67 process of being saved and where they are along the way and what does that mean for  
68 how you help them and lead them.

69 And then tomorrow afternoon I'm going to talk with you about the issue of change and  
70 transformation in the people you lead's life.

71 Sanctification.

72 How does that happen?

73 How do you keep with your group members and help them along and challenge them and  
74 press them when you need to?

75 How do you be attentive to that job of helping them to grow up in Jesus Christ.

76 Okay?

77 So that's what we're going to be doing.

78 And I'm going to give you a longish introduction tonight, and then we're going to look  
79 some at John chapter 3, and we'll finish up by talking practicals about how a person is  
80 saved, how a person is born again.

81 Let me start with my longish introduction with the idea of why good biblical doctrine is  
82 so important.

83 And I don't know if you've noticed, but...

84 Sorry, I'm talking a little bit like Elmer Fudd.

85 I don't think the sound system's helping.

86 I have allergies or something back here.

87 I'm starting to look like Elmer Fudd too a little bit, don't you think, as I get older?

88 I see pictures of myself and how very bald my head is, and it shocks me, you know.

89 I'll be bending over and my kids will snap a picture and go, Whoa, who's that guy?

90 It's you, Dad.

91 Not good.

92 The Elmer Fudd look.

93 So I don't know if you've noticed that in the past two years, really, Jesus has been doing  
94 something in the lead pastors in the network that has really shocked us.

95 And all along in the process, as Jesus has formed this small network of churches, we've  
96 been shocked at the changes he keeps working in us.

97 It's like he keeps pulling back layers of things where we were either very immature or we  
98 simply were wrong and didn't understand issues correctly.

99 And in the past year or so, year and a half, Jesus has been dealing with us as lead pastors  
100 a lot on the issue of good biblical doctrine and why it's so important.

101 I just really, in a way that I don't understand, about a year and a half ago, just stumbled  
102 upon, of course, by dumb luck, right?

103 Because we don't really believe in the sovereignty of God at all, right?

104 Stumbled upon a biography of Martin Luther.

105 And I read it, and it profoundly impacted me.

106 It was as if Jesus was just thrusting me forward in reading biographies, first from the  
107 1500s, then the 1700s, and then the 1800s, of these pastors, these men that God had used  
108 so profoundly at different times in history as he was awakening the church.

109 And it had a deep impact on me.

110 And one of the things that affected me the most was the issue that the church in our  
111 culture, in our society, in our day and age, still suffers from mistakes made back in the  
112 1700s.

113 And I never understood it until that history was, until I was reading that.

114 And I began to understand the mistakes that people made.

115 And specifically on the issue of the sovereignty of God and the freedom or freedom of  
116 choice of humans.

117 And sometimes we refer to these things as Calvinism and Arminianism.

118 I hope you've read the Grudem stuff, the chapters that your lead pastor, I think, asked you  
119 to read before you came here.

120 Because it will save us a lot of breath in talking through this stuff.

121 I don't use those words, Calvinism and Arminianism, publicly when I'm teaching.

122 I want people to read the Bible, and we teach the Bible.

123 And I don't say, you know, I'm a Calvinist, or we just believe Reformed theology, or that  
124 kind of stuff.

125 I don't use those terms.

126 There's so much baggage with them and so much fighting that has happened over the  
127 terminology.

128 But we teach the Bible and what the Bible says on these things.

129 [(10:03)]

130 And so basically the quick lesson in it is Reformed theology or Calvinism upholds the  
131 sovereignty of God in all things.

132 In all things.

133 And I would say that's what the Bible does from start to finish.

134 Upholds the sovereignty of God.

135 Arminians claim human freedom and human choice that God cannot cause or plan our  
136 choices. and this issue has created just unbelievable divide in the history of the church.

137 I have a, most of you know that our history was with the Vineyard, that we used to be a  
138 part of the Association of Vineyard Churches and as this has all been happening in me in  
139 the past year and a half or so, I have a theory about what happened with the Vineyard.

140 And here's what I think.

141 If John Wimber had answered the question of the sovereignty of God with the Vineyard,  
142 they would not be in the spot they're in today with doctrine, biblical beliefs eroding at an  
143 alarming pace.

144 And I say that with love for them and especially love for John, who I am greatly indebted  
145 to for the leadership that he gave me through the years, not personally, but at a far  
146 distance in me being a part of that.

147 But he didn't answer the question.

148 He basically said, you'll have to just decide in your own heart.

149 And it left a great uncertainty in the movement.

150 And so after John died then, there was a really a crazy fast, within five years, a crazy fast  
151 deterioration of the doctrinal foundation.

152 And it continues, in my opinion, to erode at an alarming rate.

153 And this is not new.

154 It's not something new.

155 There's huge implications in how you approach the Bible and what you believe from the  
156 Bible, how you see it and how you look at it.

157 Now, I've always believed what I would call now a light reformed gospel.

158 I've always read Grudem since I have been in a church.

159 And I still think that he is one of the best, most concise, clear, biblical theologians  
160 speaking to the church today.

161 And I'm amazed at the clarity that he brings.

162 And with me always believing those things, one of the things that I had inherited was a  
163 kind of what I would call a light Arminian practice.

164 Do you ever do that where your beliefs are one way and what you practice or how you  
165 live is another way?

166 Do you ever do that?

167 And so there were things about salvation and about how a person is saved where I was  
168 emphasizing things wrongly, not clearly biblically.

169 And, you know, it was part of our environment and part of what I had experienced and  
170 inherited.

171 And so the problem is, if you hold an Arminian view that human choice and human will  
172 is prominent or takes the first place, you might say, and God's sovereignty cannot  
173 interfere with that, you hold a place that I would suggest is very contrary to the Bible.

174 And the problem with holding perspectives where you have to work really hard to explain  
175 the Bible away or to get around a verse in the Bible is that once you do it on one text, you  
176 will inevitably, and if not you, the people you lead, will inevitably eventually apply the  
177 same logic to another text.

178 Do you get what I'm saying?

179 It's so important that we hold to clear biblical theology.

180 And so my practice with salvation was something like this.

181 I believed in the sovereignty of God and that he saves and it's his choice and all that.

182 [(15:00)]

183 But I practiced, man, if I can just get them to pray, to say, yes, I'll surrender to you, Jesus.

184 I want you.

185 I surrender my life.

186 If I could just get them to pray that, then they'll be saved.

187 You know, Sándor from Vine showed a clip not too long ago of a young girl in the streets  
188 of Athens, Ohio, actually, going down the street trying to get people to say those words.

189 And, you know, she did.

190 She got them to say the words.

191 And it was just laughable and ridiculous.

192 They were drunk.

193 They were mocking.

194 They had no intention at all of really believing Jesus, and they were not drawn to him,  
195 obviously.

196 And she got him to pray the prayer and felt good, like she had got him saved, and now it  
197 was going to take effect.

198 I didn't go that far.

199 But there's a whole movement in Christianity from long ago that practices Christianity  
200 with those underpinnings.

201 Finney would say, if we would just get busy, we can bring about revival.

202 There's large numbers of people being saved.

203 If Christians would just get busy, we can do it.

204 And you know where the focus is on that, right?

205 That somehow we could actually make it happen.

206 And if it's not happening, then it's our fault.

207 How many of you feel that frequently?

208 You know, if it's not happening, it's my fault.

209 There's a lot of things not happening, right?

210 Have you ever read the book of Acts?

211 How the church is supposed to be?

212 And then you look around at the churches we're a part of and you go, oh, huh.

213 What do you do then?

214 Well, you say there's a lot happening that ought to happen that's not happening.

215 And it doesn't matter how much you stand in your head, do flip-flops, beg, all of that  
216 stuff.

217 We should pray for it.

218 We should seek God for it.

219 But he acts and moves in his time, in his will, when he's ready. the implications of how  
220 we approach the Bible are gigantic one of the things that I learned as I've been reading  
221 was where the Unitarians came from do you know where the Unitarians came from you  
222 know who the Unitarians are they they believe anything and everything is fine and good  
223 and okay as long you're sincere and so they do a little buddhism and a little christianity  
224 supposedly.

225 It's not... it's not Christianity at all but you know they mix that in there and everything's  
226 great. um I... the one in Bellevue... we have to drive by it now because there's a detour  
227 and I drive by and they always have their sign out there "we're spiritual not religious" and  
228 you... but you want to wonder what Spirit are they being spiritual with?

229 You know, it's scary stuff.

230 You know where they came from?

231 Congregationalist Christian churches.

232 Congregationalist Christian churches that bought into a light view of Scripture and  
233 Arminianism and began to deteriorate over time.

234 And you see what it ended up being now.

235 I ask the question a lot, what will this network of churches be in 50 years?

236 What will this network of churches believe in 50 years?

237 See, as soon as we start messing with the Bible, God's Word, getting around it, having  
238 things where we have to do all kinds of acrobats, acrobatics to try to get around a text, we  
239 get ourselves in huge trouble.

240 It happened in the Vineyard over the egalitarian issue.

241 Does the Bible say that men must lead their family in a godly, Christ-like, loving way,  
242 and among the men are chosen the pastors for the church?

243 Or not?

244 The work that you have to do to get around the text in the Bible that say that is shocking.

245 To try to get around the Bible actually saying that, to get out of it, to be able to say, no,  
246 we can go with the culture, it doesn't matter.

247 You know, anybody can do anything, it makes no difference.

248 The work you have to do makes you discount significant parts of the scripture.

249 And the same thing happens on this issue of the sovereignty of God.

250 We don't understand the sovereignty of God and how this all works completely, but the  
251 Bible's not unclear.

252 Let me just give you a quick example, and then we're gonna get to our main text that  
253 we're gonna do tonight.

254 [(19:57)]

255 Look to Romans 9 for just a minute.

256 These are verses that can make you choke and struggle and wonder, how can it be so?

257 And the bottom line is, if we're honest, we have to say, I don't completely understand  
258 how it can be so.

259 I don't.

260 God is amazing and profoundly beyond us.

261 But he says it's so about him.

262 And thus, we believe it.

263 Look at this.

264 Let's just read a little bit of it.

265 Chapter 9 in Romans, verse 1.

266 I'm speaking the truth in Christ.

267 I am not lying.

268 My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit that I have great sorrow and  
269 unceasing anguish in my heart.

270 For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my  
271 brothers, my kinsmen, according to the flesh.

272 I might just interrupt and ask a question if you love your group members like that.

273 That's how he loved his people, his nation, you know, his own race.

274 They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving  
275 of the law, the worship, and the promises.

276 To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ,  
277 who is God over all, blessed forever.

278 Amen.

279 But it is not as though the word of God has failed.

280 For not all who are descendants from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of  
281 Abraham because they are his offspring.

282 But through Isaac shall your offspring be named.

283 This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God.

284 And sorry, let me insert again.

285 You have to remember Jesus telling the Jews when they said, We're Abraham's children.

286 He said, Don't say that.

287 You'd believe me if you really were Abraham's children.

288 This means it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of  
289 the promise are counted as offspring.

290 For this is what the promise said.

291 About this time next year I will return and Sarah shall have a son.

292 And not only so, but also when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our  
293 forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing, either good or bad,

294 in order that God's purpose in election might continue, not because of works, but because  
295 of him who calls, she was told, the older will serve the younger.

296 As it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.

297 What shall we say then?

298 Is there injustice on God's part?

299 By no means.

300 For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy.

301 And I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.

302 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy.

303 For the scripture says to Pharaoh, For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might  
304 show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.

305 So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

306 You will say to me then, why does he still find fault?

307 For who can resist his will?

308 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God?

309 Will what is molded say to its molder, Why have you made me like this?

310 Has the potter no right over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel for  
311 honorable use and another for dishonorable use?

312 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with  
313 much patience the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction in order to make known the  
314 riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory.

315 Even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles.

316 Let me ask you, what do you do with those verses?

317 How many of you say that hurts your feelings a little bit, that reading that, I mean, it kind  
318 of causes you some discomfort.

319 [(25:00)]

320 Raise your hand if it causes you discomfort.

321 Raise them really high because I want everybody to look around.

322 Okay?

323 Me too.

324 Do any of you completely understand it?

325 How God who is good and loving and merciful and almighty and all powerful has in his  
326 wisdom, his perfect wisdom, chosen to do such things in his own way.

327 What do you say?

328 What do you say?

329 Do you say, God, I don't like how you did it.

330 I think the universe should be different.

331 You know, I always describe that kind of talk as ridiculous as your iPad turning on you  
332 and taking over your life and saying, no, I'm in charge now, not you.

333 And it becomes the boss.

334 It's ridiculous because the iPad is man-made.

335 And it's what Paul says.

336 How can what is God-made, that is us, Turn on him and say, what right do you have to do  
337 what you've done?

338 And so here we are, this great mystery.

339 God who is good.

340 I mean, how many of you have experienced God as good and merciful and kind?

341 Raise your hand again.

342 How many of you experienced that?

343 Crazy, isn't it?

344 How kind and merciful he is.

345 Can we not trust Him with the things that we do not understand fully?

346 And that are great mysteries.

347 Can we not say we believe it, God, because you say it is so?

348 Whether we're comfortable or not makes no difference. whether we know how to kind of  
349 explain it all or not, or whether people are pleased with us for believing it or not, God, as  
350 long as we have you, we know who you are, we know your kindness, we know your  
351 mercy, we don't understand your thoughts in their entirety, by any stretch of the  
352 imagination.

353 To think somehow that we should is like thinking that your two or three-year-old, for  
354 those of you who have kids, should understand why you do what you do.

355 When you pay bills, when you spank them, when you, you know, whatever it is, right?

356 Do they understand it?

357 No.

358 When they say, where do babies come from?

359 Do you get out the science book and explain it to your two or three-year-old?

360 No.

361 From God.

362 Mom and I love each other.

363 That's where you came from.

364 We love each other.

365 That's what you explain.

366 And you expect them to understand it where they can.

367 We're creatures.

368 We're created by God.

369 Molded by his hand.

370 Now, the reason I say all of that is this.

371 If Wimber had answered the question of the sovereignty of God, the people that he led  
372 would have said, we must follow the Bible and what it says.

373 We must follow it.

374 We must hold to it.

375 We must adhere to it.

376 We cannot bend it.

377 We cannot offend it.

378 We cannot break it.

379 We cannot try to get around it.

380 We don't understand it all.

381 But why would we try to evade the Word of God?

382 We either believe it's the Word of God or we believe it is something much less than that.

383 And that gives us a right to get around it, to evade it, to discount portions of it, to not  
384 understand it, To say, you know, there's people that have said, I mean, leaders of large  
385 churches that have just simply said about profound issues.

386 Oh, we can't answer this question with the Bible.

387 The egalitarian, complementarian issue.

388 I mean, they've looked right at me and said, you can't answer this question with the Bible.

389 I think, what?

390 What Bible do you read?

391 See, the issue is you don't like the answer in the Bible.

392 We live in this uncomfortable tension, guys.

393 [(30:00)]

394 We are creatures.

395 And when one generation does not submit themselves to the God of the Bible and His  
396 Word in the Bible, the erosion of Christianity will begin.

397 And every generation always says, but we won't take it that far.

398 We're only going to go this far.

399 But what they don't understand is, if they don't go farther, which they probably will in a  
400 few years, the ones who come behind them will.

401 You read the history of the church and what has happened.

402 I read about Whitefield and Wesley in the 1700s, and I'm just horrified and saddened.

403 Wesley says, I cannot logic it out, so I cannot believe it.

404 And he avoids the sovereignty of God.

405 He resurrects Arminian beliefs and promotes it fiercely.

406 Whitfield, heartbroken, pleads with him not to do it.

407 He does it anyway.

408 And the truth is, you look around at Christianity today, and not every case, but in most,  
409 the descendants of the effects of those decisions have clearly played out to go more and  
410 more and more and more away from true biblical doctrine.

411 You look at the churches, the denominations that are supporting all kinds of immoral  
412 things.

413 You look at the way that their view of gender and gender roles and God's design in men  
414 and women being created in His image for this profound and beautiful demonstration of  
415 God's love for His church.

416 You look at those things eroding away so profoundly.

417 It's so critical that we hold to right biblical doctrine.

418 It's so critical.

419 If the source of our belief has to be logic and not the Bible, we will fall.

420 We will be in sad shape.

421 Logic is important, but it does not trump the Bible ever.

422 Does that make sense?

423 Logic is important.

424 We think.

425 You're supposed to think.

426 You're supposed to use your head.

427 But it does not trump the Bible.

428 Now, we're going to read John chapter 3.

429 And while you're turning there, I want to tell you another aside.

430 Because there's another danger.

431 This life's not easy.

432 The evil one is ruthless.

433 And there's another danger.

434 The other danger is this.

435 That we would become so hard, that we would become so argumentative, so determined  
436 that everything was going to be just exactly thus and so, that we would become mean-  
437 spirited Christians.

438 Have you ever met one?

439 There are some people, some well-meaning, theologically sound Christian leaders in the  
440 world today that I always cringe when I know the people that I lead are listening to them  
441 a lot.

442 Because I can predict the next thing.

443 The next thing is they're going to get nitpicky, mean, argumentative, and rebellious  
444 against their leaders.

445 It always happens.

446 And that's a danger too.

447 And I'm just adding that little free bit before we read the text because I've talked about  
448 the importance of us holding to the scripture, but it is the truth in love is what Ephesians  
449 4 says we're to become.

450 It's what Jesus demonstrated himself so beautifully, the truth in love.

451 At the point where you become an argumentative, nitpicky, pain in the butt to your  
452 leaders, you've gone wrong the other direction.

453 Does that make sense?

454 I know none of you would ever be a nitpicky, argumentative pain in the butt.

455 But the other people in the church might become that.

456 And so you should be aware.

457 There's a place of great humility as we approach the Bible.

458 When the Bible tells us, do not get into foolish arguments, means it.

459 There's a place of great humility where a person believes the Bible, upholds the Bible,  
460 teaches the Bible, knowing that, I don't understand it completely, but look at this, what it  
461 says.

462 And their heart is tender and merciful and kind.

463 [(35:10)]

464 And that's what we're looking for as we walk this dangerous life where the evil one tries  
465 so hard to take us off track.

466 Okay?

467 That's my longest introduction.

468 Are you with me?

469 Okay, now let's do John chapter 3, verse 1.

470 Chris, you want to read this for me?

471 You can use my Bible up here.

472 I don't know how to turn it on, but you're a music guy, so you should know.

473 Read 1 through 15. there you go through 15 there we go 3 1 through 15 got it now there  
474 was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus a ruler of the Jews this man came to Jesus  
475 by night and said to him Rabbi we know that you are a teacher come from God for no one  
476 can do these signs that you do unless God is with him Jesus answered him Truly, truly, I  
477 say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

478 Nicodemus said to him, How can a man be born when he is old?

479 Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?

480 Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he  
481 cannot enter the kingdom of God.

482 That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

483 Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again.

484 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it  
485 comes from or where it goes.

486 So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

487 Nicodemus said to him, How can these things be?

488 Jesus answered him, Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these  
489 things?

490 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and we bear witness to what we  
491 have seen, but you do not receive our testimony.

492 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you  
493 heavenly things?

494 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

495 And Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,  
496 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

497 Yeah, that's good.

498 Thanks, Chris.

499 Okay.

500 So many of you, not all of you, have read the story, you've read this account with Jesus.

501 It's an account that I come back to over and over and over and over because Jesus is  
502 talking to a guy about this issue of being born again.

503 And it's profound.

504 If you're reading Romans and the text in Romans about salvation, you've got to go back  
505 and read this, putting it in context together.

506 How is a person born again?

507 How does it happen?

508 What takes place?

509 And so Nicodemus comes to Jesus, and he's complimenting him, and Jesus just cuts to  
510 the chase with him.

511 Truly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

512 Does that have your attention?

513 Something has to happen to us, or we cannot see the kingdom of God, period.

514 This is Jesus talking.

515 You have to be born again, he says, or you just simply don't get to see it.

516 It's not going to happen.

517 And he uses this word born again rightly.

518 The rest of the Bible talks about it.

519 We use words like saved, regenerated, words to describe this act of God in making a new  
520 man or a new woman out of us.

521 And we'll get a little bit more to what it means in a second.

522 Let me ask you a question about this term Jesus used, born again.

523 Did any of you birth yourself?

524 You birth yourself?

525 Is it possible to birth yourself?

526 Do children dig their way out?

527 Is that how it happens?

528 No, they don't, do they?

529 Jesus chose this image, this description of how a person enters his realm, his kingdom,  
530 how a person is saved as born again.

531 And clearly implying to us, saying to us, you might even say shouting to us, you don't do  
532 this yourself.

533 [(40:05)]

534 It's not that way. It doesn't work that way. You can't do it.

535 It's something that is done to you.

536 A baby, you might say, is expelled from his or her mother's womb.

537 Our fourth child, the doctor wasn't even in the room.

538 The nurse asked her to push a little bit.

539 I told her, no, no, no, no, don't do that.

540 She has babies really fast.

541 And she said, no, it's okay.

542 She's not that far along.

543 I said, no, she has babies fast.

544 Don't ask her to push.

545 She said, it's okay.

546 Just push a little, hon.

547 And she pushes and there he came right out on the table. just like that.

548 The nurse tried to push him back in.

549 I thought, he's out.

550 I think you probably should leave him out.

551 He didn't do it to himself.

552 He was expelled.

553 He didn't choose to come out.

554 The truth is, he didn't even want to come out.

555 He was expelled.

556 He was birthed.

557 He was born.

558 And it's something that's done to you, not something that you do to yourself.

559 You might say it this way.

560 It's a secret act of God.

561 It's something He does to a man or a woman.

562 And if it's not happened, you cannot see the kingdom of God.

563 The people that you lead cannot see the kingdom of God.

564 The people that are going to be coming into the church you're a part of in these next two  
565 weeks, they cannot see the kingdom of God unless this work of God is accomplished by  
566 God in them.

567 It's not something they're just going to choose.

568 That's not how it works.

569 It's something that God does.

570 He explains it more in verse 6. Actually, look back in verse 5.

571 “Truly, truly, he says it again, I say to you unless one is born of water and the spirit you  
572 cannot enter the kingdom of God.

573 That which is born of flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit and...”  
574 he's just describing natural man and regenerated man... natural man, natural woman,  
575 born of flesh... that's what you have. Spiritually dead, physically alive. If you only have  
576 one birth, you're going to have one death, and they equal out dead, right?

577 Jesus says, “no,” you have to be born a second time.

578 You have to be born again.

579 And this time, it's not a physical birth.

580 It's not something that happens in the natural person.

581 It's not done by flesh.

582 It's done by the Spirit of God.

583 Spirit, capital S, gives birth to spirit, small s.

584 That is, our spirit makes us spiritually alive.

585 It's something that he does.

586 The Holy Spirit does this work of regeneration in a person.

587 And then he describes it further in this wonderful description.

588 He says first, verse 7, “Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again.”

589 And then he explains it a little more.

590 “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you don't know where it  
591 comes from or where it goes.

592 So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

593 Now again, get Jesus' image and his words here.

594 Did you see the wind this afternoon blowing the rain?

595 Did you see that?

596 Luke and I were standing out on the patio watching it because we don't get rain like that  
597 in Seattle.

598 We just get dreary drip all the time. you get rain here.

599 And it was rain and the wind was blowing.

600 Any of you know where that wind that was passing by a few hours ago is right now?

601 Do you know where it was a few hours before?

602 Could you find it?

603 Could you hunt it down?

604 Do you know where God sent it from?

605 Do you know where he's sending it to?

606 It sounds like how God was talking to Job, doesn't it?

607 Jesus, that's what it's like.

608 The wind blows wherever it wishes.

609 You hear the sound. You see what it does, but you don't know where it comes from,  
610 where it's going to.

611 It's a sovereign act of God. It's something that God does.

612 It's something that you and I can't control.

613 It's not something that we can make happen. It doesn't matter how badly you want a  
614 person to be saved and you should badly want it. It's not something that you can do.

615 [(45:00)]

616 It's not within your ability.

617 They can't do it to themselves and you can't do it to them.

618 It is an act of God.

619 Should you ache and pray?

620 Absolutely.

621 Paul starts Romans 9 talking about this whole issue of how he would give up his own  
622 salvation almost. be damned that they would believe, that they would be saved.

623 That's a right heartache in a Christian knowing that some will be saved and some will not,  
624 and it's God's sovereign choice.

625 That's a right response to ache and to long and to pray.

626 We just had our lead pastor meeting for the network the last couple of days, and Sándor,  
627 as he was teaching a session, was talking to us about his dad, who's 71 and not in very  
628 good health.

629 I know his dad from way back when we were first planting vine.

630 His dad would come to small group.

631 He's an old hippie.

632 I can't say an ex-hippie because he's still thoroughly a hippie.

633 And we would try to have group, and he would go lay in the corner on the couch and  
634 snore during group.

635 And then we'd all have nightmares the whole night, my wife and I.

636 I mean, he's a hurting guy.

637 Sándor loves him dearly.

638 He's shared Jesus with him. Talked with him about it. Pleaded with him many, many  
639 times.

640 And I was dumbfounded. Sándor sat there, and said to us, with sincere heart, "My dad's  
641 getting old and he's in bad health. He doesn't know Jesus at all. He's not been born again.  
642 Jesus has not done that. And I can tell you that if he dies an unbeliever, I trust God in his  
643 wisdom."

644 And he even went so far as to say, "I can't believe he saved me at all.

645 I would be exactly like my brother and sister who are so far from God and buried in evil."

646 It's the essence of what he was saying.

647 "I would be exactly like them were it not for the grace of God. And if he doesn't save my  
648 dad he will only accentuate his glory and his mercy in saving me."

649 That's a right heart toward God. It's a right heart.

650 You can't do it. You can't do it.

651 You can't save your spouse you can't save your kids.

652 I have four kids. Do I want them to be saved? Absolutely. Do I ache over it? Absolutely.

653 I would say with Paul, I would give up my own that they could be saved. But you can't do  
654 that either.

655 It's not earned by us, it's not our doing, it's not our choice, it's not our wisdom, it's not our  
656 sovereignty.

657 It's his. The wind blows wherever it wishes. You see the effects. You can hear the noise.

658 We'll talk more about that, what you see and what you hear when that's happening.

659 You don't control it. You can't do that.

660 This is Jesus teaching about regeneration.

661 This is how Jesus, who died on a cross for you, the great substitute, who hung in your  
662 place and my place, who took the horror of our sin and the shame and the wrath of God  
663 against sin on his own body, suffered it brutally in our place, that we could be rescued  
664 from hell, and he came at the right time when he chose and saved us by that grace.

665 It's him speaking. It's your Lord. It's the one who knows how things really are.

666 Okay?

667 Does that make sense?

668 Do you understand that?

669 He would say to people things like, Listen, I came from heaven.

670 No one else has ever come from heaven.

671 I came from heaven. You're of earth. And I tell you what I've seen in heaven and you  
672 don't believe me.

673 Why?

674 Why wouldn't you believe me?

675 That's where I come from.

676 That's my land.

677 That's my Father. That's his kingdom.

678 Why wouldn't you believe? It's your Lord speaking He said this is how it is and the  
679 question is just simply for all of us, as we read the words of our Lord in the Bible, "will  
680 you trust him or do you trust yourself more?"

681 Right? Isn't that the real issue, if you're honest? Will you trust him or will you trust  
682 yourself more?

683 [(50:00)]

684 The Bible's so clear, even God himself, who ordained it so, does not delight in the  
685 punishment of the wicked.

686 Figure that one out. But that's what he's like. He doesn't.

687 It's a sovereign act of God, guys. You can't do it to yourself or to another person. You  
688 can't.

689 You know, I've told the story of my own salvation through the years. Most of you have  
690 probably heard me tell it at one time or another, some of you probably haven't... find a  
691 book, Central Michigan University's campus in a bathroom. C.S. Lewis's *Mere*  
692 *Christianity*. I take the book home.

693 Sorry for the poor guy that left it there.

694 I hope he was already saved and the Holy Spirit whispered to him.

695 I read it, and somehow while I'm reading it, I believe.

696 As I'm reading about Jesus' death, as I'm reading about what he did, somehow I believe.

697 I don't quite know how.

698 I don't know what happened to me, if I'm honest.

699 How did that take place? What happened to me?

700 How did I go from like I was to being obsessed with knowing Jesus? What happened?

701 The truth is, for a while I thought, I'm really smart. I finally found the answer to all this. I  
702 wasn't smart at all.

703 God did something.

704 God did something that I couldn't do in those moments.

705 I found myself believing.

706 That's what happened.

707 I was born of the Spirit. Was it my decision?

708 No way. It wasn't my decision.

709 It was an act of God.

710 My decision at best was an afterthought response to what he did.

711 Does that make sense?

712 Did you follow what I just said?

713 My decision was an afterthought response.

714 He made me new and caused me to believe and he imparted to me faith.

715 It's a gift of his, not my own.

716 And thus I responded to him.

717 Thus I decided, yes.

718 But the decision's a little ridiculous.

719 It's like falling down and then saying I did that on purpose.

720 Right?

721 I didn't decide it.

722 My decision, do I decide to follow Jesus? Yes, I decide to follow Jesus every day.

723 And it's a complete response to him and what he's done.

724 Not my doing.

725 I turn my life over to Jesus moment by moment.

726 Maybe a dozen times a day I tell him again, I'm all yours, I surrender to you.

727 You can have my life.

728 Everything I am, do whatever you want.

729 Am I saving myself in doing that?

730 No.

731 I'm just simply responding to a mercy that I did not deserve.

732 I deserved hell.

733 I deserved judgment.

734 But he gave me mercy.

735 Why?

736 I don't know.

737 I don't know.

738 I'm just a simple backwards country kid from northern Michigan.

739 So full of sin by the time I was 25.

740 My sin piled up so high.

741 Any one of them would have rightly condemned me to hell forever.

742 And he won.

743 Why?

744 I don't know.

745 Not because of anything I did, I can tell you that. not because of anything God saw in me  
746 that I was going to be this or that.

747 No way.

748 It was mercy and grace and grace alone that saved us.

749 It was His act.

750 It was born again.

751 It was expelled from the womb of God, you might say.

752 Birthed by God.

753 Born of the Spirit.

754 Not our doing.

755 [(55:00)]

756 And it has huge implications in how we do church.

757 Okay?

758 It has huge implications for how you function as a group leader.

759 Or the spouse of a group leader.

760 It has huge implications for how we talk in our language.

761 So let me spend some time now just talking practically about kind of what we've done  
762 and how we are slightly tweaking our practice.

763 Okay?

764 There's no like...

765 The truth is, the changes that are happening are almost not noticeable to most people.

766 They're small changes, they're small corrections to how we practice things.

767 So, in the old days, what I would say is, if you would like to receive Jesus today, raise  
768 your hand.

769 You ever heard that before?

770 If you'd like to receive Jesus today, raise your hand.

771 And, you know, it implies if they just choose or just believe, they'll be saved, right?

772 And the truth is, and guys, I have detailed records of the number that did that from 1995  
773 until two years ago.

774 And you know what?

775 If we tracked back those people, you and I both would be horrified and nauseous over  
776 how many of them do not follow Jesus at all.

777 Somehow it makes us feel good to count them, to say, oh, another one was saved.

778 We got five today.

779 Look at them.

780 They raised their hand.

781 They said, yes.

782 It makes us feel good.

783 It kind of scratches some itch that we have to be able to do this, to count it.

784 You know, I think a lot of the people that raised their hand through the years were saying,  
785 I would like to believe and if raising my hand will make it so, I'm happy to raise my  
786 hand.

787 Or they felt attracted to Jesus.

788 You know, a person can kind of feel attracted to Christianity for reasons other than being  
789 regenerated, being saved.

790 They can be attracted to it because I need to have a good moral upbringing for my kids.

791 So when you join a club, what do you do?

792 You do what the club says you do to join, right?

793 You fill out the form.

794 So if this is what you do to join the club, I join the club.

795 But that's not salvation.

796 That's not regeneration.

797 That's not being born again.

798 And the thing that's hardest about it is that I fear that we've, By doing so made many  
799 people, you might say, immune to salvation, hardened their heart.

800 I mean, you think about it.

801 And I know, I know some of you are going to say, but God's sovereign, so he'll save them  
802 anyway, right?

803 Yes, right.

804 Okay, but what we do affects people, and our choices do affect people and have  
805 consequences.

806 And if we harden the hearts of people by our behavior, in the same way, if you're a  
807 religious freak, And your language, and everywhere you go, you're using crazy words.

808 Have you been washed in the blood of the Lamb and stuff like that as you approach  
809 people?

810 They're going to think you're strange if you go around using language that people don't  
811 use.

812 You're going to harden them, you might say, to Christianity.

813 And so you look at this and you look at what has happened.

814 And I fear that we have caused people to think that they were saved, regenerated, born  
815 again. belonged to Jesus, when many of them may very well not have experienced true  
816 salvation.

817 That scares me.

818 A lot of them said yes and didn't follow Jesus, the evidence that they weren't truly saved.

819 Now, those who raised their hand, any of you raised your hand in a service and that's how  
820 that happened with you?

821 I want to see. Come on, come on, fess up, fess up.

822 Justin? In a D.C.?

823 Over there, over there.

824 Anybody else?

825 Raise your hand.

826 That's how it happened.

827 You raise your hand, see it works.

828 Those he was saving, he would have saved anyway.

829 And the raising their hand was a response to the regenerating work that Jesus was doing  
830 in them already.

831 [(1:00:00)]

832 Let me use an example.

833 Jeff Miller back there.

834 I remember when he was saved.

835 Jeff says I don't remember the facts exactly accurately so he can correct you later or  
836 correct me later and tell you what they were.

837 But the facts that I do know for sure is that he was standing there with his brother,  
838 Mickey.

839 They were standing side by side.

840 And Jeff and Cheri had been around for a few weeks, maybe a month at that time.

841 Jeff, am I right?

842 You got to correct me if I'm something like that.

843 And I asked if anyone would like to turn their life over to Jesus. and I can still see in my  
844 mind's eye Jeff and Mickey standing side by side both with their hand straight up in the  
845 air.

846 It was so exciting.

847 Two brothers saved side by side, right?

848 That's when you put a little, you highlight that in your pastor records and say that was  
849 really cool.

850 Jeff was transformed, made new by the Holy Spirit.

851 And Mickey? As far as I know, there's no evidence at all in his life that he was saved  
852 now. It's not over yet, right? It's not over. Still breathing.

853 We don't know what God's doing. We don't know how this is going to go, but two  
854 brothers stand side by side. Both say "yes, I want Jesus." Both respond. Both raise their  
855 hand.

856 One is clearly saved and the other one apparently not. Not yet.

857 See, if a person is truly born again, there's evidence of it.

858 The wind blows. You hear the sound.

859 That's how it is, Jesus said. You see effects.

860 That's how it is.

861 Some of the effects are really important.

862 A person becomes heartbroken over sin when they're born again.

863 Horrified by it. Scared of it.

864 Which allows repentance.

865 They see it for what it is.

866 Their eyes are opened.

867 You know, Jesus said all the time, He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

868 Do you ever wonder why he says that?

869 Because lots don't have ears to hear.

870 Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear. There's effect. There's response. One of those  
871 things.

872 Is heartbroken over sin. Another one, if someone is truly regenerated, they don't want  
873 to live in sin anymore. Sin becomes something that's nauseating. Repulsive. When they  
874 do. If they... when they sin, it's different now.

875 The Holy Spirit convicts. They feel sick about themselves.

876 They feel horrified by it.

877 It scares them.

878 One young man at Blue Sky who just in the past year and a half Jesus has saved, just  
879 wonderfully, dramatically, his name is Dave Bieraugel.

880 He actually starts on Staff Monday as a staff pastor.

881 And God has done something in him that's so profound. watching him through the  
882 process just amazed me.

883 He never raised his hand.

884 Nobody ever said, you know, come on up here, pray this prayer.

885 Jesus made him new.

886 He began to be utterly heartbroken over sin.

887 He began to not to know for the first time in his life how bad he had really been.

888 He came in one day to talk to me and he said, I don't know what's happened to me.

889 I don't have a stomach for sin anymore.

890 He said, I can't do the things I used to do.

891 I can't do it.

892 I said, what do you mean?

893 He said, well, my friends, you know, they still do all the stuff we've always done.

894 And I get around them, and I expect to get around them and keep doing what I've always  
895 done.

896 I didn't know it.

897 You know, I had to stop all that, but I get around them, and I can't.

898 It was like it almost bothered him.

899 It upset him.

900 I want to, but I can't.

901 Why?

902 He's not the same man. He's a new man now. He's different. He's had a spiritual birth.

903 He's been made new. He doesn't want to live in sin anymore.

904 Young man, Adam, I was just talking to him on Sunday. He's a Boeing engineer. He  
905 grew up Catholic, a friend from Purdue actually who I don't think went to Clear River,  
906 started coming to Blue Sky, invited him from work at Boeing.

907 And he came, and he was just talking to me on Sunday.

908 [(1:05:10)]

909 His face just beaming.

910 It was like his face was lit up.

911 And what he tells me is, I think Jesus saved me.

912 He said, when I first came, the first Sunday, I did not like what you were saying at all.

913 And he said, now I can't stop listening to it.

914 I was just like, tell me more, tell me more.

915 He's getting baptized in a few weeks.

916 He cannot believe what's happened.

917 He talks about it all the time.

918 He's obsessed with Jesus.

919 He'll just shake his head and smile and say, man, it's so good.

920 What happened?

921 Jesus made him new.

922 He gave him eternal life.

923 The Holy Spirit regenerated him, made him a new creature, entirely new creature.

924 For those that are truly born again, there's a love for the Bible.

925 Frequently, they find themselves consuming the Bible where they didn't used to.

926 They used to read it and it made no sense.

927 How many of you experienced that?

928 It used to not make sense, and all of a sudden you're reading, and it makes sense to you.

929 Raise your hand if you experienced that.

930 I love that.

931 Isn't that exciting?

932 You read it, and it was just words, and then all of a sudden it makes sense.

933 It pops out.

934 You want it.

935 This also happens with preaching.

936 It happened with Adam.

937 They begin to teach me the Bible.

938 Tell me more.

939 They want to know.

940 Well, it's an evidence.

941 It's hearing the sound the wind makes that a person has actually been born again.

942 There's an obedience to Jesus that happens and a love for his church, a love for his  
943 people.

944 They can't stay away.

945 Dave Barago was so funny because he was the ultimate independent.

946 There is no way anybody's going to tie him down.

947 You know, self-help success person.

948 That was the, I mean, that's what he was.

949 And after Jesus saved him, he went back home to Minnesota.

950 We thought he'll never come back because he was trying to move back there to go to law  
951 school.

952 He'll never come back.

953 He went home after Jesus made him new to Minnesota where he wanted to live.

954 And you know what he said when he came back?

955 I missed my small group so much.

956 I can't not be around.

957 They're my people now, aren't they?

958 That's how he was talking.

959 Nobody coached him.

960 Nobody told him what to say.

961 They're my people now, aren't they?

962 Yeah.

963 A love for the church.

964 An obedience to Jesus.

965 A love for the church.

966 You'll see these evidences in a person.

967 It's a great change.

968 It's not just a tweaking of a person's life.

969 Christianity that says, you know, Jesus just adds some flavor to your life, makes it a little  
970 better, is not biblical Christianity.

971 That's not what biblical Christianity is.

972 New creature.

973 That's what the Bible says.

974 2 Corinthians 5.17 If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

975 The old has passed away.

976 Behold, the new has come.

977 That's it.

978 New creation.

979 Born again.

980 Born of the Spirit.

981 Flesh gives birth to flesh.

982 That's not enough.

983 You have to be born of the Spirit.

984 Spirit gives birth to Spirit.

985 New creation.

986 New man. That's what it is.

987 There's a young woman at Blue Sky that came up to me on Sunday, just, again, just  
988 smiling and beaming.

989 I had heard that when she first came around she was severely depressed and hurting and  
990 messed up. She grew up Muslim, and here she is. She's standing there in front of me  
991 Sunday saying "Jesus has saved me."

992 She said, "when somebody's teaching the Bible, I just want them to keep going all  
993 afternoon. I want them to keep going."

994 And you teach and she sits there like this.

995 You know, she's just absorbing.

996 How does that happen to a person?

997 Have you ever tried to do that to yourself?

998 You remember trying to make yourself interested in God's stuff?

999 But you're not. So you fake it?

1000 You pretend you're interested?

1001 It's yet to be seen what's going to happen with her. I don't know.

1002 I hope that it's the real thing.

1003 I hope it's not just a liking of Jesus from a distance.

1004 I hope he's really made her new.

1005 And time will tell.

1006 [(1:10:00)]

1007 Time will tell. We'll see the effects. We'll see the results in her life.

1008 Okay, you get what I'm saying, okay?

1009 What time is it actually? Luke, or somebody... no... Ern? 9:09. Okay good. So I have  
1010 about 20 minutes, then we're going to pray.

1011 It's early for me so I can go till midnight if you want. It's only 6:09 in Seattle, so I'm  
1012 getting a little hungry, but, you know, besides that, everything's good.

1013 So how does it change what we do?

1014 How does it change what we do?

1015 The first thing is, inviting people to Jesus.

1016 Do we invite people to Jesus? Absolutely. We constantly are inviting people to Jesus. We  
1017 constantly are saying, "Come to him. Come and be saved. Come and believe. Come and  
1018 find life."

1019 Jesus said it constantly to people. "Come to me, all you who are burdened, I'll give you  
1020 rest for your soul."

1021 We constantly are inviting people to Jesus. That does not change. I want to read to you a  
1022 little bit from a book called *Revival and Revivalism*.

1023 I don't like the word revival, by the way. I occasionally use it because I have to in the title  
1024 of a book or something.

1025 But I think *Awakening* is a better term to use.

1026 It doesn't carry the same baggage that revival. Because, I mean, a lot of people talk about  
1027 revival as scheduling a weekend of meetings where people just get really excited.

1028 But that's not historical Awakening of the Christian church.

1029 That's an act of God through history.

1030 But let me read this for you, just on this issue of how does it change what we do.

1031 There are aspects of biblical doctrine which are directly related to evangelism.

1032 These have to do with the real condition of human nature and the work of the Holy Spirit  
1033 in regeneration.

1034 Here lies the difference between Arminian and Calvinistic teaching, which has immediate  
1035 consequences in practice.

1036 Arminianism treats believing and regeneration as amounting to the same thing.

1037 The gospel is to be preached to all men.

1038 The same light comes to all who hear it.

1039 And those that believe are born again.

1040 According to this view, the truth is heard.

1041 The truth heard is the means of regeneration.

1042 But if this is so, why is it that among a congregation hearing the same gospel truth, some  
1043 respond and others do not?

1044 There are only two possible answers to the question.

1045 Either man is so dead in trespasses and sins as the scripture represents, and the difference  
1046 can therefore be explained solely in terms of human choice, Or there is a work of the  
1047 Spirit additional to the outward hearing of the message, a work which lies behind the  
1048 will, giving men a new nature.

1049 The latter, the old school believed, is the biblical position.

1050 Men not only need the light of truth, that is, they need the capacity to see it.

1051 Do you understand that?

1052 They not only need the light of truth, someone telling them the truth about Jesus,  
1053 someone preaching about Jesus, they need the capacity to see it.

1054 They need a removal of the enmity which causes them by nature to receive not the things  
1055 of the Spirit.

1056 They need to be made willing.

1057 The voice of the preacher leads people to exercise faith, But the ability to believe comes  
1058 only as the dead hear the voice of the Son of God himself, of John 5.

1059 This is a voice which the unsaved do not hear.

1060 It is the calling which brings faith and justification.

1061 And it is much more than the outward hearing of the words of the gospel.

1062 Regeneration is the putting forth of creative power and implanting of a new nature.

1063 There can be no exercise of faith until men hear the gospel.

1064 But it is the power of the Holy Spirit with the gospel which first gives men a believing  
1065 nature.

1066 Salvation is through faith, not because of it.

1067 [(1:15:05)]

1068 It's through faith, not because of it.

1069 Men are not renewed because they believe.

1070 Rather, they see and hear because they are reborn.

1071 Did you get it?

1072 It's the chicken egg thing.

1073 Is it that you believed and thus you were saved?

1074 Or you were saved and thus you believed?

1075 Well, I think the biblical position is, clearly you were saved and thus you believed.

1076 So the implications for what changes with us, what do we do in practice?

1077 Well, we no longer ask, "have you accepted Jesus?" with the intent of getting them to do  
1078 so as if their accepting is what saves them.

1079 Does that make sense?

1080 You know, and you just have to forgive me if you're confused, because I've confused you  
1081 through the years.

1082 I mean, we taught people when they pray for people. When you're praying for something,  
1083 and this is my bright idea. Isn't it brilliant, you know?

1084 When you're praying for something, you don't know if they've been saved or not, then  
1085 while their eyes are closed and the Holy Spirit's near, say, "Hey, keep your eyes closed a  
1086 second. Have you turned your life over to Jesus?"

1087 Where's the focus of action in that question? Where's the focus of action?

1088 Is it on God or on them?

1089 It's on them, right?

1090 And if they say no, then you say, would you like to?

1091 Where's the focus of action in that question?

1092 Them.

1093 And if they say, yes, I would like to, then you get them to pray, right?

1094 I'm sorry that I taught you to do that.

1095 Please forgive me.

1096 I don't think it's how we should go about it.

1097 The last time I did that with a person was the mother of one of our dear members who has  
1098 breast cancer.

1099 It was about a year ago.

1100 And I knew that she had breast cancer.

1101 I felt concerned for her because I love her daughter so much.

1102 And her daughter brought her up for prayer at the end of the service.

1103 And I went and prayed for her.

1104 And I just thought, Jesus, we better hurry this one.

1105 She has breast cancer.

1106 I prayed for healing for her body.

1107 And then I asked her.

1108 She was crying.

1109 I mean, duh, she has breast cancer.

1110 She doesn't want to die.

1111 And in her emotion, she said, yes.

1112 And you know what I told her next after she said yes and she prayed?

1113 I told her, you never have to fear hell again.

1114 So let me ask you a question.

1115 What if that day she was not truly regenerated, but just hoping for help from God?

1116 What did I do?

1117 The Holy Spirit started bothering me about it intensely this past fall.

1118 And I was going to sit down and write her a letter just to see how she was doing.

1119 And she showed up at Blue Sky, you know, like the next Sunday.

1120 And I got to talk to her.

1121 And my question for her was, how are you doing?

1122 And she thought I meant with the breast cancer.

1123 I really, I mean, I cared, but I didn't care that much about that.

1124 I said, so how are things with Jesus?

1125 and she said, they're good, which didn't persuade me of anything.

1126 And so I asked her, do you read?

1127 Oh, I love reading.

1128 And I said, could I send you a book?

1129 And I asked her some questions about what kind of stuff she reads.

1130 Does she like detail, hard-thinking stuff or light kind of feeling good kind of  
1131 encouragement?

1132 She said, detail, hard-thinking.

1133 And so I mailed her Lewis's "Mere Christianity," because I tremble that I would try to  
1134 give somebody assurance that it's only God's to give.

1135 [(1:20:07)]

1136 It just changes our practice slightly.

1137 That we would be so concerned that people would be in Christ.

1138 That we would just step carefully and not say more than we have a right biblically to say.

1139 Does that make sense?

1140 So instead, I talk with people now about what happens when a person is being saved.

1141 That's what I do now.

1142 I watch for it, and I talk with them about it.

1143 What might they notice when Jesus is saving them?

1144 What might they be thinking about?

1145 What might they feel?

1146 I tell people, ask Jesus for this new birth.

1147 Ask him.

1148 Ask him.

1149 Don't stop asking.

1150 Ask him until you have a great confidence that it has occurred, that he's done it, that you  
1151 feel the movements of salvation in you.

1152 Ask him.

1153 And don't comfort people too soon.

1154 Don't comfort people too soon.

1155 We are experts at this because we are the self-help, fix-ourselves generation, aren't we?

1156 We're the experts at comforting people too soon.

1157 So if somebody comes to us hurting or struggling with sin or something, we're so quick to  
1158 want to just comfort them.

1159 Jesus forgave you.

1160 Don't think about it.

1161 Don't worry about it.

1162 Not a big deal.

1163 We're so quick to comfort.

1164 I want to read you about a guy that I love and I cannot wait to meet when I die.

1165 His name is Nathan Cole.

1166 It's out of George Whitefield's biography.

1167 And let me just read it for you.

1168 He's a guy in the 1700s in the United States.

1169 Two days after parting from Jonathan Edwards, his father, Whitefield, Oh, Jonathan  
1170 Edwards and his father.

1171 Whitfield came to Middletown.

1172 His meeting there was not usual or unusual in any way, for he merely says of it, preach to  
1173 about 4,000 people at 11 o'clock.

1174 But one of his hearers penned a description which shows how the mayor knew that he  
1175 was coming to preach created a sudden excitement and brought almost the whole  
1176 countryside hurrying to hear him.

1177 The writer was an unlettered farmer named Nathan Cole, and he wrote, Forgive me for  
1178 not reading what he wrote very well.

1179 Now it pleased God to send Mr. Whitefield into this land, and I longed to see and hear  
1180 him.

1181 Then one morning, all on sudden, there came a messenger and said, Mr. Whitefield is to  
1182 preach at Middletown this morning at 10 o'clock.

1183 I was in my field at work.

1184 I dropped my tool that I had in my hand, and I run home and through my house and bade  
1185 my wife to get ready quick. and go hear Mr. Whitfield preach at Middletown.

1186 And I run to my pasture for my horse with all my might, fearing I should be too late to  
1187 hear him.

1188 And I took up my wife and went forward as fast as I thought the horse could bear.

1189 When my horse began to be out of breath, I would get down and put my wife on the  
1190 saddle and bid her ride as fast as she could.

1191 I guess she was running while he was riding.

1192 I bid her ride as fast as she could and not stop or slack for me except I bade her so I  
1193 would run until I was almost out of breath, then mount my horse again, fearing we should  
1194 be too late to hear your sermon.

1195 For we had 12 miles to ride, doubling in little more than an hour.

1196 I saw before me a cloud or fog, I first thought, from a great river.

1197 But as I came near the road, I heard a noise, something like a low rumbling thunder.

1198 And I presently found out it was the rumbling of horses' feet coming down the road.

1199 And this cloud was a cloud of dust made by the running of horses' feet.

1200 It rose some rods into the air over the tops of the hills and trees.

1201 When I came within about 20 rods of the road, I could see men and horses slipping along.

1202 It was like a steady stream of horses and their riders, scarcely a horse more than his  
1203 length behind another.

1204 I found a vacance between two horses to slip in my horse and my wife.

1205 I don't, anyway.

1206 I saw that our clothes will be all spoiled, see how they look, and we got down to the old  
1207 meeting house where there was a great multitude.

1208 [(1:25:00)]

1209 It would be said three or four thousand.

1210 When I look towards the great river, I see the ferry boats running swift forward and  
1211 backward.

1212 When I see Mr. Whitfield come up on the scaffold, he looked almost angelical, young,  
1213 slim, slender youth before thousands of people. And with a bold undainted countenance.

1214 In my hearing how God was with him everywhere.

1215 As he came along it solemnized my mind.

1216 And put me in trembling fear.

1217 Before he began to preach.

1218 For he looked as if he was clothed with authority.

1219 From the great God.

1220 And a sweet solemnity sat upon his brow.

1221 And my hearing him preach gave me a heart wound.

1222 And by God's blessing.

1223 My old foundation was broken up and I see my righteousness would not save me.

1224 And he described then 18 months of torment over his sin before God brought the great  
1225 comfort of salvation.

1226 What if God is working in people to trouble them?

1227 They would understand sin and our need and the desperateness of our situation apart from  
1228 Christ and his work.

1229 What if there are times when God is troubling people Do you tell them, don't feel that  
1230 way, don't think that?

1231 We have to be careful not to comfort too soon, to know what's happening, that the work  
1232 of God can be deeply done in a person, that we can stand with them in great love as they  
1233 go through these workings of God to convict a person of sin and the terror that goes along  
1234 with knowing that we sinned against a holy God, a good God, to be there to speak hope  
1235 and compassion and help for them, to tell them to keep going and don't give up, to remind  
1236 them what Jesus said, come to me and I will give you rest, rest for your soul.

1237 And if he hasn't given it to you yet, Don't give up.

1238 Keep going.

1239 He's full of mercy and compassion.

1240 There's a reason he's working this in you.

1241 You might have said it would have been better if Nathan Cole could have just raised his  
1242 hand that day and had peace.

1243 But I'm telling you, if he had just raised his hand that day and thought it was over, he  
1244 would not have had peace.

1245 God was doing a work in him.

- 1246 That day, in Nathan's own words, he was breaking up his foundation.
- 1247 Any of you ever have God do that to you?
- 1248 Break your foundation?
- 1249 Tear away your security?
- 1250 Rip away the things that you've trusted in?
- 1251 Force you not to rely on them anymore?
- 1252 Sounds just like him, doesn't it?
- 1253 Because he loves you so much.
- 1254 He loves you so much.
- 1255 Sometimes we comfort people far too soon when we need to simply stand with them and  
1256 encourage them to keep going as God works His deep work in their soul.
- 1257 I tell people now, believe and be baptized if you're able to.
- 1258 If you're able to believe, do so.
- 1259 And if you're not, call on His name.
- 1260 Call on His name.
- 1261 Ask Him to open your eyes that you would see. Ask Him.
- 1262 Baptism is the great response of the saved in the Bible. It's not raising your hand. You  
1263 can't find it anywhere. Nowhere.
- 1264 Baptism is the great response, even in the situations of profound outpouring like has not  
1265 been seen on the face of the earth since like in Acts chapter 2.
- 1266 What did he tell them? He told them, repent and be baptized.
- 1267 That's what Peter tells them.
- 1268 Baptism is the great response of the saved.
- 1269 It's what we are to call those who are being saved to.

1270 To teach them.

1271 [(1:30:00)]

1272 That's how you respond if Jesus has saved you.

1273 By the way, that's why we believe in a believer's baptism.

1274 That's why we don't baptize infants.

1275 Those who have not yet believed.

1276 It's so important.

1277 It's so important.

1278 It is the great response of those who have been regenerated.

1279 That's what it is.

1280 In and of itself, it does nothing to save a person.

1281 It does not improve the standing with God of a person who does not believe.

1282 It does not help them.

1283 The only thing it will do is make it hard to respond in baptism when they really are  
1284 regenerated, because then they will be confused.

1285 But I was baptized then.

1286 How many of you have struggled with that?

1287 Baptism is the great response of the saved.

1288 It is what we're to call men and women to, who have been regenerated.

1289 And we pastors have been soberly warned and aware that we need to know who we're  
1290 baptizing.

1291 There needs to be some kind of assurance in them and in us as we talk to them that  
1292 they've indeed been regenerated.

1293 It's so important that we don't cause people to have a kind of false assurance, a vain hope.

- 1294 Who wants to answer to those people in the end if they were not saved at all?
- 1295 Who wants to answer to their cries for mercy when they face eternity apart from God?
- 1296 Baptism is the great response.
- 1297 We are commissioned by Jesus to make disciples for Him.
- 1298 That is something we do after he saves a person.
- 1299 He's not saying, you save the people.
- 1300 We can't.
- 1301 We declare the message.
- 1302 We tell people, repent and be baptized.
- 1303 If you're able to believe, do so.
- 1304 And when you do, be baptized.
- 1305 That is the biblical model.
- 1306 You look through the New Testament and find another. You have to work really hard to  
1307 make up another. Really hard.
- 1308 Forgive me for my intensity. All of our pastors in the network are meeting with people  
1309 who are interested in talking to somebody about being baptized because we want to help  
1310 them along.
- 1311 We want to know how they are.
- 1312 We want to know how they're doing.
- 1313 We want to know what's happened.
- 1314 We want to help encourage them.
- 1315 We want to give them more from the Bible about Jesus if they don't know, if they've not  
1316 really heard this truth about it.
- 1317 We want to talk with them.

1318 We want to help them in the process and that when they go into those waters that they  
1319 have a great confidence that they have been saved by Jesus.

1320 Evidence varies in intensity from person to person.

1321 You have to understand that some of you, when Jesus saved you, felt very little. You just  
1322 knew he had. Some of you wept and sobbed over your sin. All of you, I expect, felt the  
1323 conviction of sin to one degree or another.

1324 If you didn't, I'm very concerned.

1325 But some people feel it quietly and soberly and maybe even subtly, you might say.

1326 And others feel it with a great tearing of their heart and their soul and a great grieving  
1327 over what they've been and what they've done and how they've offended God.

1328 And all of it, the different varying degrees, that's not important.

1329 It's not if you cry more, you're saved more.

1330 That's not what it is.

1331 There's varying degrees of intensity in these things as we talk with people.

1332 Some of it has to do with people's personality and how God designed them.

1333 Some of it has to do with their training and their culture.

1334 Some of it just simply has to do with how God chooses to do this great surgery on a  
1335 person.

1336 [(1:35:00)]

1337 We're going to pray in just a second, but I have one more thing I want to talk to you about  
1338 before we do.

1339 I think it's important. The Bible talks in Romans about Christians having an assurance  
1340 that we are indeed saved.

1341 And in the book of Acts, in times of great outpouring of the Spirit in history... also, there  
1342 were times when it seemed like every Christian had a deep assurance that they belonged  
1343 to Jesus, a deep confidence that it was true.

1344 But right now in history, we live in a dry time.

1345 That is, we live in a time of the horrible deterioration of the church.

1346 We live in a culture where the church is quickly crumbling.

1347 And people are abandoning, you might say, Jesus and the church and proving what they  
1348 are.

1349 And those kinds of times in history there seems to be little assurance in those who are  
1350 genuinely saved of their salvation. If you're curious on this stuff I would recommend you  
1351 read Martin Lloyd Jones book *Joy Unspeakable*.

1352 If you've not read it already, it is... it is... I don't know how to describe it... except  
1353 breathtaking. On the Holy Spirit and on the work that the Holy Spirit does in a person.

1354 At the conference, a summer conference two years ago, I think it was, might have been  
1355 last summer. When you get old, you lose track of time.

1356 I said something about me myself longing that Jesus would give me a great assurance of  
1357 my salvation.

1358 And I find myself knowing that he has saved me, longing for the experiential assurance  
1359 of it frequently.

1360 And I don't know if that makes sense to you or not.

1361 Let me say it another way.

1362 You can be genuinely saved and not have the experiential comfort and joy of knowing  
1363 that you are in a deep emotional way.

1364 Does that make sense?

1365 You can be genuinely saved by Jesus and not experience the great joy unspeakable the  
1366 Bible talks about.

1367 And Lloyd-Jones says it is a different experience than salvation.

1368 And it amazes me.

1369 He says there are periods in history when there's almost no Christians that have  
1370 experienced it, the dry times.

1371 And he says there's other periods, like the book of Acts, when it seems like almost every  
1372 Christian experienced this profound assurance of their salvation in an emotional sense, In  
1373 a sense where they were lit up with affections for God and passion for Him.

1374 They knew they belonged to Him, that they were a son or a daughter.

1375 It was so deep in them and moving and emotional and it lingered.

1376 And he says there's other times when people have experienced it once in their life. In that  
1377 experiential sense and never again.

1378 The verses that talk about it in Romans 8 verse 14. Let me just read them for you...

1379 "For all who are led by the spirit of God are the sons of God, for you did not receive the  
1380 spirit of slavery to fall back into fear..." And I don't know what you think about it, but  
1381 Lloyd-Jones says that fear is actually a fear caused by the Holy Spirit when a person is  
1382 being saved. A fear of sin and a fear of judgment.

1383 That's a right fear.

1384 [(1:40:02)]

1385 He says, "you didn't receive the spirit of slavery to fall back again into fear, but you have  
1386 received the spirit of adoption as sons, daughters, by whom we cry, Abba, Father."

1387 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

1388 And he says, that spirit-bearing witness with our spirit is the experience of assurance.

1389 The Holy Spirit bringing this great assurance inside a man or a woman that we are sons  
1390 or daughters of Father.

1391 I experienced it years ago and I long for it still.

1392 I was at a conference. This was before we planted vine. There was an elderly couple  
1393 praying for me, and in the midst of the prayer, the old man leaned over and wrapped his  
1394 arms around me and hugged me as he prayed.

1395 And the Holy Spirit did something so profound in me. A, like, childhood playground  
1396 chant started running through my mind.

1397 I am a child of Almighty God. I am a child of Almighty God.

1398 And with the greatest delight, I couldn't stop it.

1399 He prayed for me for a half hour maybe and I left that experience and went out and I laid  
1400 flat on the grass in the lawn of the place where we were and the chant went through my  
1401 head nonstop.

1402 I laid there and I laughed.

1403 I was crying.

1404 I was so full of joy that I would belong to Jesus, that he was my father, that God was my  
1405 father, that I was his son, that he had adopted me, that I belonged to him.

1406 All the rest of that day, all through the night in my dreams, the chant would not stop.

1407 I woke up the next morning with the chant still going through my head.

1408 I could barely interact with somebody because it was just constantly running through my  
1409 head.

1410 It lasted for maybe 24 hours, a kind of delight.

1411 I think it's something like being with him when I get to see my father face to face.

1412 So delightful and wonderful to have this assurance of belonging to him.

1413 We live in a world of dark shadows.

1414 We live in a world where we don't see it as it really is.

1415 And even among those who are truly saved, we often don't feel the joy that's set before  
1416 us, the glory that is ours in Christ.

1417 But there are glimpses of it and experiences of it that the Holy Spirit gives.

1418 This assurance that we belong to Him.

1419 And the church is in desperate need of the Holy Spirit to do this.

1420 For the Holy Spirit to be poured out in our day and age.

1421 Like he was poured out in the book of Acts.

1422 Like he was poured out in the 1700s in the first great awakening.

1423 Like he was poured out in the second great awakening from 1800 to 1850. 50 years of  
1424 great outpouring.

1425 And millions of people saved dramatically by the Holy Spirit.

1426 Power of God working dramatically.

1427 We are in desperate need of God to act and move among us.

1428 And I long this weekend that for many of you, He would give you a great assurance that  
1429 you are His.

1430 That you are His son.

1431 That you are His daughter.

1432 That He will not leave you or forsake you. That he will certainly finish what he started in  
1433 you, that he will bring you on into glory, that the same glory that has been given to Jesus  
1434 would be put upon you.

1435 Why?

1436 What have you and I done?

1437 Well, nothing.

1438 Just because of his great love and mercy.

1439 And I long that he would work in us and do this in us.

1440 I don't want to take time for questions tonight.

1441 Let's stand up.

1442 We're going to pray.