

Questions and Answers 2007, Part 1

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We are in that fun time in the middle of summer when we take a couple [of] weeks to answer Bible questions. So, if you're wondering what text we're going to be looking at, it's every text, I guess, [at which we] need to look. Every August we take a few weeks and let you submit questions, and I go through [and answer] them. [For] some of them, I say, "Well, I just preached on that," [and for] some, I think, "We've already dealt with that in another Q&A or [sermon]." So some of [the questions] get weeded out. [Others] are kind of like Jack Hughes questions—they aren't really Bible questions—so if you want to know about Jack Hughes, you can talk to my wife.

[A] tension [occurs when I try to decide] how many questions I should answer. I could preach a whole series of sermons [on every question I get]. [If I try] to really be thorough, [I might only answer one question]. The person who asked that question is going to be [humming and happy] because he had his question answered really well. The problem is [that] all the other people [would say], "Well, he didn't answer *mine*." If I answer too many questions, then I don't give [them] a thorough-enough treatment, and then people a lot of times have more questions, and then [this Q&A time] backfires. So, I try and do as many as I can. Just so you know, I'm going to try and answer nine questions this morning. (I did it the first service.) Then

next week I'll be able to get into some more. I don't know how many. We'll just see what the Lord does.

So, if you're a visitor here, this is just something we normally do while people are gone on vacation for a couple of weeks in August, which is kind of fun. (If you waited until I preached on your topic from Luke it would probably never happen.)

Hebrews 10:26–27

The first question is this: “When you did your series on the Church, you quoted Hebrews 10:26–27, and said that the sin referred to in this passage is ‘forsaking the assembly of the local church,’ since that is the nearest antecedent sin mentioned in the text. It says, do not forsake ‘our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth...’ [10:25–26].” [The author] says “sinning willfully,” [and] what is the nearest sin mentioned? It's forsaking the assembly of the saints. That's what [the person asking the question is] talking about. [The question goes on:] “You, [Pastor Jack], said that [forsaking the assembly] was the sin, yet my topical study Bible says this text is referring to Jews who returned to the sacrificial system. Then in the last part of the series on God's sovereignty and your salvation (7/29/07), you seemed to reverse your position and said that Hebrews 10:26–27 refers to Jews who have returned to the sacrificial system. Which position is correct?”

The answer is: Both. [The Jews referred to in the passage] returned from being involved in the Church, [the assembly], to the sacrificial system. Bingo. All right, second question. That [first question] was the easiest question of all. Both answers are correct. They forsook [the assembly] by going back into Judaism.

God's Promise for Ishmael

Second: "In Genesis 16, Hagar bore a son to Abraham, or Abram, and named him Ishmael. The angel of the Lord said to Hagar, 'I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count' [16:10]. Ishmael was the progenitor of the Arabs. What is their future? Does God promise them more in Scripture?"

Hagar was Abraham's second wife, his first wife being Sarah. Sarah, of course, was beyond the age of childbirth, and even when she was in that range, she was barren. It was far beyond the [time] for her to have a baby. Well, wanting to help out God in fulfilling His promise, she decided that she would give her maid, Hagar, to Abraham as a wife so that Hagar could then get pregnant and maybe raise up children on [Sarah's] behalf. Abraham went for this, listened to the voice of his wife, and that's exactly what happened: Hagar became pregnant. However, Hagar began to despise Sarah and treat her with scorn because she was pregnant and Sarah wasn't. [Hagar] was Abraham's wife—Sarah was, too—[and Hagar] was pregnant, which made her more important and better, and too bad for Sarah. Sarah did not like this. She treated Hagar harshly and Hagar fled into the wilderness. She was pregnant then.

The angel of the Lord then appeared to Hagar in the wilderness where she fled, and told her to return and submit herself to Sarah. [He] gave her this promise in Genesis 16:11–12:

The angel of the LORD said to her further, "Behold, you are with child, And you will bear a son; And you shall call his name Ishmael, Because the LORD has given heed to your affliction. He will be a wild donkey of a man, His hand will be against everyone, And everyone's hand will be against him; And he will live to the east of all his brothers."

This describes the Arab nations perfectly, doesn't it? If you just look at the history [of that nation], there has been constant warring, constant

fighting, not only among themselves, but [with] all their neighbors. And so, that [passage] was the [angel's] prediction of what [would] happen.

Hagar returned to Sarah, and eventually Hagar gave birth to Ishmael when Abraham was eighty-six. Later, God spoke to Abraham and reaffirmed the promise that He had made to him, [saying], "Abraham, your wife, Sarah, is going to have a son and give birth."

Abraham said, "Well, can't [my heir] just be Ishmael? I mean, come on. Sarah's barren." I think he didn't quite understand what was going to happen.

Then the Lord replied to Abraham in Genesis 17:19–21 with these words:

But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year."

Abraham was 99 years old at the time, which means that he was 100 when Isaac was born, which means that Ishmael was about 14 or 15 at the time. After Sarah gave birth to Isaac, Ishmael began to mock Isaac. Paul, in [Galatians] 4:29, says [that] Ishmael persecuted Isaac. We don't know [how he persecuted him, but] maybe when [Isaac] was being weaned, [Ishmael] was scoffing at him, or whatever. This made Sarah mad again, she went to Abraham, and said, "This Ishmael child is not going to have an inheritance with my Isaac" [see Genesis 21:10]. The angel of the Lord then appeared to Abraham, the Lord spoke to Abraham, and said, "Listen to the voice of your wife" [see 21:12]. And so, Hagar was then sent away into the wilderness with Ishmael, her teenaged son, and there the Lord appeared to Hagar and told her what had been previously promised to Abraham [see 21:18].

In Genesis 21:20–21 we read: “God was with the lad, and he grew; and he lived in the wilderness and became an archer. He lived in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.” If you remember from Genesis 16:1, it says that Hagar was an Egyptian maid, and so [since she was] an Egyptian she got an Egyptian wife for Ishmael. So the Arab nations are one-third Jewish and two-thirds Egyptian.

In Genesis 20:21–22, we read: “God was with the lad, and he grew; and he lived in the wilderness and became an archer.” That’s really the best part about him—he became an archer. If you know the story of Israel, the Arab nations have constantly, persistently, and without fail, attacked [Israel], blamed them, [and] accused them. [The Israelites] are the “infidels,” along with all the non-Muslim nations. But since they’re neighbors, [the Arab nations] despise [the Israelites] especially. There are a whole bunch of things that go into it. You have the Arab nations [thinking], “Hey, Ishmael is the firstborn child. Ishmael deserves the rights of the firstborn. Isaac shouldn’t even be in the picture.” They have kind of biblical justification for these thoughts.

In Genesis 25:[18], it says of Ishmael’s descendants, “They settled from Havilah to Shur which is east of Egypt as one goes toward Assyria; he settled in defiance of all his relatives.” If you know the Arab nations, they’re kind of east, northeast, and southeast of Egypt. They love to fight each other and they’re in defiance, definitely, against Israel. It’s just been that way, hasn’t it? They’ve just been that kind of stubborn, wild-donkey-type people. “Wild donkey” is a figure of speech used to describe somebody who is untamable. Wild donkeys cannot be tamed. They bite, kick, [and] won’t obey. This is what we’ve seen played out in history.

What promises are made [to Ishmael’s descendants]? Really, the only other promises are the promises that are true of all the nations. Yes, they are mentioned specifically, along with Judah, and all the nations as being nations that will be judged. According to Revelation 5:9 and 7:9, we know that in heaven there will be some from every tribe, tongue, and nation. So,

they will be saved, they will get to heaven, and they will be judged if they don't repent just like us in America. There's not really any difference.

I think this, though, is one of the fatal flaws the president [of the United States] had in his plan in dealing with Iraq. [He] didn't quite understand when attempting to establish democracy in Iraq [that] this is a religious issue, a prophesied issue, and you cannot undo prophecy by any sort of military force, or diplomacy, or whatever. You can't undo it. It's the way it is, and God said it was going to be that way, and it's going to be that way.

Where to Unbelievers Wait for Judgment?

Third: "Where do unbelievers who die go when they await the White Throne Judgment, and ultimately the lake of fire? Do they even know those things are coming to them? Also, are there varying degrees of torment/punishment in hell just as there are different levels of rewards for believers in heaven?"

There are actually three questions here. (People are very tricky when they do these things.) So let's talk about these. First, unbelievers go to a place of torment when they die. In the Old Testament, that place was called Sheol, the place of the dead. If you look at various Old Testament texts that talk about Sheol, sometimes [it] is described as a scary place, like a monster opening up its mouth to devour those who are wicked [see Isaiah 5:14], and other times it's a place where believers, godly people, go. We know from Luke 16:19–31 in Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus that before [Christ] died and rose again, this place called Sheol, which in the New Testament is called "Hades," or "hell," was just the place of the dead. There seemed to be a compartment or an area that was a place of blessing, a place of comfort and peace, where the saints awaited the death and resurrection of Christ. Then there was the place the rich man was in, which was a place of agony and torment in flames. That's how Jesus describes it.

But, of course, after Jesus died and rose again, He emptied out this place of comfort in Sheol, and now the New Testament uses the terms “hell,” or “Hades” [to refer to where only unbelievers go]. Hades is borrowed from Greek mythology, but the New Testament freights New Testament meaning into it. The whole idea is [that] it is a place of agony, torment, darkness, weeping, gnashing of teeth—a lot of really scary terms are used of hell or Hades. There’s also another place [that] believers don’t go, it’s a place called Tartarus. I’ll give you some resources if you want to study this more. That’s a place for especially wicked demons. Anyways, unbelievers now go to a place [called] hell or Hades, where they wait for judgment.

How much do they know when they are there? That depends on how much they knew before they died, but one thing is for sure: as soon as they die, they are instantaneously and perfectly conscious, and they know there’s a God, they know they didn’t worship and serve that God, and they know they’re in big trouble. Now, how much they know about the Bible, what the Scriptures say, depends on what they knew in this life. We don’t know if they’re told anything after that. But certainly, at the Great White Throne Judgment, everything is made perfectly clear to them. They don’t get cast into the lake of fire as clueless people, [thinking], “What’s going on?” They’re well aware of what’s going on.

A lot of times we talk to people about people dying and going to hell or Hades, what we’re really saying is, “Yeah, that’s where they go for a time.” Then at the end of the reign of Christ on earth, at the Great White Throne Judgment, which is spoken of in Revelation 20:11–15, the unbelievers of all the ages are assembled, along with the believers of all the ages, the demons, Satan, the antichrist, the false prophet, all the holy angels, and Christ. There, everybody is judged, and the unbelievers [are] cast into the lake of fire, which is the final resting place of those who are damned. Now, the Olivet discourse [see Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21] tells us that the lake of fire was originally prepared for Satan and his angels, but unbelievers go there because they would not believe in Christ.

Degrees of Eternal Punishment

Third, in the lake of fire, will there be varying degrees of punishment just as there are varying degrees of rewards in heaven? Yes, there will be. Jesus said, for instance, in Matthew 10:15: “Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.” The “more tolerable” describes varying degrees of punishment. In Matthew 11:22–24, it says something similar, [and] the parallel text in Luke 10:14 says something very similar [as well]. You can listen to [a] sermon [I did on this subject called] “Woe, Judgment, and Hell.”¹ If you were here you may remember it. It will answer that question [in] some further detail.

In Luke 12:41–48 in the parable of the sensible slave, it alludes to degrees of punishment in hell. It says: “And that slave who knew his master’s will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few” [12:47–48]. Here we learn that people are punished in hell to the degree of the knowledge they have. The more knowledge you have, the greater punishment you receive for not acting upon that knowledge. That’s why it is very dangerous to come to a church like this and yet reject Christ, because we are into disseminating knowledge at a high rate.

You might come here for the first time, and [think], “Man, that guy goes long! I’m going to have to get the tape and listen to it ten times to try and get it all sorted out.” A lot of times, churches in their little ten-, fifteen-minute very shallow [sermons] don’t give out much information. Well, [if] you go to a church that preaches and teaches the Word, and you go to a Sunday school that does the same, you go to youth group, and you go to [a] discipleship group, and men’s or women’s ministry, you’re getting it, and getting it, and getting it, [then] you better act upon [the knowledge

¹<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2007/20070325>

you receive], because Jesus judges more severely those who have more knowledge.

In Hebrews 10:29, the author of Hebrews says, and this is in relationship to the first question about those Jews who departed from the Church to go back to the sacrificial system: “How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?” The whole key phrase here is: “How much severer punishment.” There are greater degrees of punishment. That is clear. Multiple Scriptures talk about this.

If you want more information, you can call the office, and if you don’t want to listen to the sermon from Luke, “Woe, Judgment, and Hell,” you can get a lesson called “The Doctrine of Hell,” which lists all the various verses that deal with hell, all the different names [for it], and defines all those things. You [might also want to] get Thomas Watson’s book called *A Mischief of Sin*. There is a chapter in that book called “Hell’s Furnace Heated Hotter.” If you dare, you can read that one. You could [also] read Jonathan Edwards’ sermon “The Future Punishment of the Wicked, Unavoidable and Intolerable,” if you really want to be scared. Anyway, those are some resources you can look at, but yes, there are varying degrees [of punishment in hell].

Is Hell Eternal?

Four: (This is a similar question. I try and clump these together sometimes [if] they kind of relate.) “Some Christian faiths believe that the soul dies and the body and soul of an unbeliever is resurrected at judgment to be destroyed by fire once for all time and that souls do not burn forever in hell. What does Calvary Bible Church believe and what Scriptures do you use to support that belief?”

The Word of God teaches that unbelievers suffer eternal, conscious torment in the lake of fire forever and ever. That's what the Scriptures teach. Isaiah 66:24 (the last verse in Isaiah, by the way) describes the judgment of unbelievers, and says this: "Then they will go forth and look On the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me. For their worm will," in the future, "not die And their fire will," in the future, "not be quenched; And they will be an abhorrence to all mankind." The phrase "their worm will not die and their fire will not be quenched" is a euphemism. Usually when you die, as hard as you may try, the worms eat you. Once they eat your carcass, there's nothing left, and then they go on to other places or die. In this case, they don't ever stop eating, which is a picture of the person being eternally food for worms. The second metaphor, or illustration, is fire. If you start a fire, it consumes the [available] fuel, and then it dies out. [In] this [verse it says that] the fuel never dies out. The pictures are very similar. God is saying [that] the unbeliever will experience eternal consumption in hell, and it will never end.

Matthew 18:8 and 25:[41] both describe hell as "eternal fire." Mark 9:43 describes [hell as] "unquenchable fire." In 2 Thessalonians 1:9 it describes hell as "eternal destruction." The fires of hell are always and forever burning. Why would they burn if there was nothing to burn in there? Why is there this eternal fire if there's nothing to burn in that eternal fire? What is the purpose of that? See, they would have no purpose.

Now, you may say, "Well, yeah, but Jack, that's early on. Jesus has died, and He's risen from the dead, and things have changed." Well, Revelation 14:10–11 is pretty clear. Speaking of the damned, John says:

He also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and

night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.

Here, they are being tormented day and night. Now, if you were burnt up, it wouldn't happen day or night, it would just happen [in] an instant. Yet, the words "eternal" and "forever and ever" are added on there.

Now, someone might say, "But, Jack, again, that's still before the White Throne Judgment. Tell us what happens after that." OK. [In] Revelation 20:10, speaking of the final resting place of all unbelievers, the lake of fire, it says this: "And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also," the beast and the false prophet are men, "and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." Then, down in verses 14–15, it says: "Then death and Hades," that is, all those people who are in death and Hades, "were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire," [and it is] implied "so he could be tormented day and night forever and ever."

Now, if that's not good enough for you, then you have to get rid of heaven because the same exact words and phrases that talk about heaven being forever, being eternal, [and that are applied to] eternal life are the same ones used of hell. If you get rid of the eternal punishment in hell, you have to get rid of eternal blessing in heaven because the same exact words and phrases are used. So, the Scriptures teach beyond all dispute that hell is a place of *eternal* torment.

The Location of Heaven and Hell

Five: "Where are heaven and hell physically?" They aren't. Heaven and hell are spiritual realms, and flesh and blood do not inherit the kingdom

of heaven or hell [see 1 Corinthians 15:50]. They are places where spirit beings go.

This gets into some metaphysical stuff that's really beyond what the Scriptures tell us, but in general, the Bible speaks of hell as "down," you know, "descending into hell" [see Matthew 11:23], "plunging into hell," "dropping into hell," "going down into hell," [and] "being brought up from the grave"—those kinds of things. Heaven is described as "up." So, [those are] about the only physical references the Bible gives. When you're talking about a whole different realm, this [point in space] could be hell, and it could be functioning right now, right in this location, but in a whole different metaphysical existence. The angels exist in the spiritual realm, and we know they minister to the saints. Do you see them? No. Do you feel them? No, but they're here, just like God exists in the spirit realm. Do you see Him? No. Do you feel Him? No. He's not physical, He doesn't have flesh and bones, and yet He is here. There is a physical realm, the realm we live in, and the spiritual realm, and that realm is the realm of heaven and hell.

Questions about Psychology

Six: "Is the psychological term 'bipolar' a label for modern-day demon possession? We have a relative who has been labeled 'bipolar.' She does fine when on her medication, but is very unstable when not taking it. We have tried, on numerous occasions, to give her biblical advice, but she says, 'Don't preach to me.' What is the biblical response to someone in this position, with this attitude?"

"Psychology" means "the study of the soul." The field of psychology today is a mess. If you've studied it, you [probably] realize that the founders, the creators, of psychology were men who hated God viciously. They did not believe in God, they did not believe in salvation, they did not believe in being born again, they did not believe in the sufficiency of Scripture, the sufficiency of God's grace, or the power of God to transform lives. How-

ever, they [were] trying to deal with spiritual problems. So, having ruled out the only cure for spiritual problems, they tried to deal with men's spiritual issues apart from the spiritual resources God gives us.

In order to get money from insurance companies, psychiatrists and psychologists have to treat something. It has to be a known disease, disorder, dysfunction, problem, addiction, or whatever. There is this manual called *The DSM Manual*—The Diagnostics and Statistics Manual—and if they can't find the code of the person's problem in that manual, then they can't get money from insurance companies. So, over the years, that manual has become ever-increasing, and more and more sins are being added to that manual so that [the psychiatrists and psychologists] can get money for treating people [for] whatever their problem[s are].

For instance, the disobedient child isn't a disobedient child, he has "oppositional defiance disorder." Give me your cash. See? Someone given over and enslaved to immorality has a sexual addiction. Someone who has no control over his spirit, and has developed bad habits of radical mood swings—and again, we're not talking about physiological problems, from thyroids or pituitary glands, that would be a physiological problem, not a spiritual problem—somebody who has just developed bad habits [and] he just can't cope [is labeled as] "manic depressive" or "bipolar."

Psychologists, not believing in God, the reality of God, and the sufficiency of His grace, then, have to treat these people with these spiritual problems. So, what do they do? Usually they give them what are called "psychotropic" medications. These are medications that affect the nervous system. They cause changes in a person's mood and a person's feelings. They temporarily change the person's perception, [and/or] behavior, but they are not the cure for the problem. They merely mask the symptoms of the problem.

The longer someone is on psychotropic medications, the more he depends on those medications to function. Soon, he has to have his medication or he goes "postal." (If you don't understand what "postal" is, [it means the person] freaks out.) [The person] is dependent on drugs, and those drugs

have allowed him to not exercise what little self-control he was exercising [before he went on them]. And so, if [a person] just goes cold turkey [and stops taking his medication], he just falls apart, curls up in the corner, or goes on a shooting spree. People do all sorts of weird stuff [when they go off their medication]. I saw a lady one time, racing probably 75 mph darting in and out of traffic in a neighborhood. This lady went all the way to the end [of the road], and she came all the way back, and went all the way to the end again before she finally clipped a car, and flipped her Jeep Cherokee end over end about ten times. The roof, the doors, and the wheels all came off, and she landed right side up and was unhurt. She had gone off her medications, her boyfriend had left her, and she freaked.

Drugs can be legitimately used to calm someone down who is very agitated [and] not thinking clearly, but [drugs] are never the cure for [that person's] spiritual problems. You cannot cure spiritual problems with drugs. In an article by syndicated columnist Arianna Huffington, entitled "Virginia Tech Aftermath: Did Legal Drugs Play a Role in the Massacre?" Huffington says, after noting that Virginia Tech Shooter Cho just happened to be on prescription drugs, these words:

We do know that one school shooter after another was on prescription drugs. Kip Kinkel was taking Prozac. Columbine killer Eric Harris was taking Luvox. Red Lake Indian Reservation shooter Jeff Weise was taking Prozac. James Wilson, who shot 2 elementary school kids in Greenwood, South Carolina, was taking anti-depressants. Conyers, Georgia school shooter T.J. Solomon was on Ritalin. Is this just a coincidence?

No, it's not. What happens is when you are having problems—you're worried, you're anxious, you're fearful, you're angry, whatever—these are issues that God can help you with, and only God. The first thing that happens is you need to be saved because once you're saved, you have the Holy Spirit, then you can understand the Word of God [and] you have the resources you need to deal with those things. Well, if you don't turn to God,

and you're anxious, fearful, angry, whatever, and you go to a psychologist or psychiatrist, you end up getting drugs prescribed to you to make you feel a certain way. The longer you're on those meds, the less self-control you use, and all of a sudden, you decide one day, "I'm going off my meds," and you go postal, you freak out, you crumble emotionally. [I]ve seen it happen time and time again.

The other thing that can happen is you could just slowly build up a resistance to the medication. Usually what happens, which is interesting, is that somebody has taken lithium for a while, and lithium is working just fine and making him feel right, [then] all of a sudden lithium quits working. Usually [the doctor, or psychiatrist, or psychologist] doesn't take [the person] off lithium because [the doctor is] scared to do that because he knows [the person has] been on lithium so long that he's building up a resistance to it. [So, the doctor says], "We'll keep you on that, and we'll give you something on top of it. Then, if that doesn't work, we'll give you something on top of that. If you can't sleep, we'll give you something else. If you can't wake up we'll give you something else."

[The leadership of this church has] dealt with people, I'm serious here, that are taking seven to nine different psychotropic medications. [They] come in and say, "I can't function." Well, no kidding! Here, drink this gallon of whiskey [and] you won't be able to function either. That's how it is. And you know what? The people, with all good intentions, have tried to get help. It's not like they're trying to be dysfunctional. What happens is a lot of times, when they can't function, they're labeled "disabled," and then the government pays them to stay home and take their meds. And you know what? There are a lot of people in this congregation who were on psychotropic medications who now cope with life by the Holy Spirit. You may be sitting next to one of them. We help them all the time. It's a common thing.

First, they need to come to the Lord. Second, they need to get in touch with a Christian doctor who understands the biblical process of change, and that doctor can, very slowly, wean them off their medications. At the

same time, we give them biblical counsel and discipleship, and train them up in the Lord, and all of a sudden they're sitting next to you and they're drug free. We see this all the time. It's a common thing. It's getting so common in our world that if you have a problem that has anything to do with anything spiritual, [the world's answer is:] take a drug. That is the solution. The pharmaceutical companies are making billions of dollars off of this. They train all the medical professionals, and staff, and psychiatrists, and everybody to use drugs. We're drugging ourselves into a stupor.

Now, moving on [to the other part of the question], demon possession is a fact, but we are not told in the New Testament to cast out demons, nor are we told that everybody with radical mood swings is demon-possessed. It could be [that] a demon-possessed person is labeled bipolar, but the cure for that person is not drugs, and it's not, "I cast you out in the name of Jesus!" with some holy water. The cure for that person is the cure for every other person who is a child of Satan, and that is the gospel. The gospel is able to change somebody, save him, cause him to be born again, radically transform his life, transfer him from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of Christ [see Colossians 1:13], to make him a new creature [see 2 Corinthians 5:17], and to deliver him so that the evil one does not touch him [see 1 John 5:18]. That is the cure, as we learned before: the gospel bomb is the cure. That is what is able to free somebody.

And you know what? There are people out there who have been taking psychotropic medications for a long time. They're functioning and maintaining, but I'll tell you, spiritual problems are never cured by those drugs. Only God, through the spiritual resources He supplies, is able to give a person self-control. I've had so many people come up to me, and say, "Man, I just want you to know, after being at this church for a while, I'm just doing great. I was taking ulcer medication, I was taking this, I was taking that, I was taking this. I had to take sleeping pills. I had to take this, and now I'm drug free. You healed me!" No, you just needed to learn that God's grace is sufficient and how to apply the resources God gives you, and then you can cope with reality without drugs. That's all.

One person defined bipolar behavior with these words:

For people with bipolar disorder, life can be an emotional roller coaster. It can have intense highs and crippling lows. But treatments are available to help control these extreme mood swings. Although there is no cure, with proper treatment, people diagnosed with bipolar disorder can live normal lives.

There's no cure for [being] bipolar, but we can mask the symptoms for you. I looked on the Psychiatry Online Website, and they only offered eighty-five different resources to help mental health experts try to treat bipolar people. Of course, there's no cure. And so, we tell people [to] get saved, and if they get saved, [to] go to a Christian doctor, have him take them off [the medications slowly], while they're getting good counseling and discipleship, and they can be off [medication]. There is a cure: it's the grace of God through faith in Jesus. There are a lot of people in this congregation who are living examples of that.

If you want to get more information on angels and demons, I just preached an entire series on angels and demons last year.² You can get that, listen to it online [or] get the CDs. Or you can go to the Basic Bible Doctrine class [online] and get a Bible study called "Angels and Demons."³ Or, you can listen to two sermons preached in 2003 called "Analyzing Psychology." I preached one⁴, Justin Erickson preached the other⁵, and that will give you a whole different perspective on that.

²<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2006/20060212>

³http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/teaching.aspx/basic_bible_doctrine_2003_2004

⁴<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2003/20030810>

⁵<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2003/20030803>

Suicide

Seven: “If someone professes to be a believer, seems to live for the Lord for a while, seemingly bears fruit, then gets discouraged and commits suicide, can this person be saved?” Yes. No problem. Yeah, that’s a pretty easy one. How many Christians sin? All of them. How many of you sin? I mean, come on, we’re all sinners, right? So, yeah, you can commit self-murder and be saved, just like you can do all sorts of wicked sins that are recorded that believers have done throughout the ages.

Suicide in general just happens to be the next topic we’re going to study in our key social issues class—not this night, but next week, and so, you can come and learn a whole bunch about it.⁶ All believers commit sin, and suicide is just an extra-grievous sin because it’s a total disregard for life, which is the most precious thing God has given us. Usually people commit suicide for a couple different reasons: they’re [feeling] hopeless, [or] they just want to escape, and so they think that by killing themselves it’s just going to be [over]. That’s it; life’s going to be over. Really, [though], they’re going to kill themselves in the presence of Christ, and then eternity begins, and they can’t get out of that consciousness. So that’s what I tell people who are thinking of committing suicide. [They say], “I’m thinking of killing myself.”

Then I say, “Then what?”

They [say], “Well, what do you mean?”

“OK, you kill yourself, [and] now you’re standing before Christ. Now what? Then what’s going to happen? Do you think your pain is going to go away?” See? That’s a scary thought, isn’t it? I wouldn’t want to get myself into Christ’s presence by an act of highhanded rebellion, would you? That wouldn’t be a good thing to do.

The Scriptures teach very clearly that Christians are known by their fruit [see Matthew 12:33; Luke 6:44], that Christians seek to obey the Lord, and

⁶http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/teaching.aspx/key_social_issues_2007

so, if somebody came up to me, and said, “You know, so-and-so committed suicide, but he was a Christian,” I’d say, “Well, fine.” You can’t torture yourself on the rack of your own griefs trying to determine whether someone is saved or not after he dies. I mean, after [a person] dies, it’s over. You just give him over to the Lord and know that He is just, and fair, and merciful, and holy, and He’s going to do what’s right. When we get to heaven, we’re going to be totally fine with whatever He chose to do, we [will] want what Jesus wants, and when we’re perfect we’ll really want what Jesus wants, and we’ll be fine with everything Jesus decides to do.

Now, whether that person [who committed suicide] is saved or not, I don’t know. I can just tell you this: If he had a long pattern of rebellion against God, regardless of what he called himself, and then he killed himself, there isn’t much hope. But, if he walked with the Lord, and some discouraging thing came into his life, and he committed suicide, yeah, he could be saved. It’s a possibility.

Apologetics

Eight: “What role does apologetics play in the gospel and in evangelism? An example is being able to explain the Bible canon, or creationism, or morality.” So, how does apologetics work in that? You know what? This is a hard question to answer because the question wasn’t long enough. There are different definitions of apologetics, and then there are different approaches to apologetics, and depending on what you meant by that, I can’t answer. But, I’m going to answer everything and hopefully in the broad sweep of things I’ll get [the answer to] your question in here.

In 1 Peter 3:15, Peter says: “But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.” Now, the word “defense” here, when he says, “be ready to make a defense” in the Greek is the word “apologia,” the word we get “apologetics” from.

It is, in a general sense, “a speech, an argument, an answer, a statement in defense of something.” In a more biblical sense, it pertains to all forms of Christian communication, especially with the lost. When you look at the field of apologetics, there are so many big terms that I’m just going to try and stay away from. I have to give you a few, but man, there are some terms in there. . . . You just have to go to the glossary if you’re going to read a book on apologetics and memorize the glossary first so you can find out what [the author is] talking about. [For instance], “Is this a priori argument? Is this a cosmological argument?”

Anyway, here are the general camps. These are the general approaches that people have employed to try and get people to come to Christ. There is what is called the “rational approach.” That approach presupposes that men, even though fallen, even though sinners, have minds that can reason, that can think, that can be reasoned into the kingdom. They go to texts like Acts 17, where it says Paul reasoned with the Greeks at Mars’ Hill [see Acts 17:17–19] and was trying to win them to Christ through reason.

There is another approach, the “evidential approach,” which presupposes that if the right evidences are given, which argue for certain truth claims of Christianity [and] that demand certain verdicts, that those verdicts will be arrived at, and people will be saved because the evidence is overwhelming. They also presuppose that people, in their fallen, spiritually dead state, can accurately and objectively weigh the evidence and come to the right conclusion and be saved.

There is what is called the “empirical approach.” The empirical approach presupposes that people can come to Christ based off of experiences. One common example of this is a testimony. You might be talking with somebody, and you might say, “I used to be this way,” and off you go into your testimony. You’re telling them how you lived, how you sinned, how miserable you were, and then, when you became a Christian, how your life changed. What you’re doing is you’re leading them to the Lord, or attempting to lead them to the Lord, through your experience.

These approaches in their purest form all have the flaw of failing to acknowledge how sin has corrupted mankind, and that [man is] not reasonable, [he is] not able to weigh spiritual truths, [he does] not think clearly because sin has darkened, defiled, and corrupted [his] mind, heart, and conscience so [he] cannot understand the things of God because [he is] spiritually dead [see 1 Corinthians 2:14]. For instance, I could preach a series of sermons debunking evolution. (Wouldn't that be fun? It's going to happen if I live long enough. After Luke we're going to go to Genesis, and then after that, Titus, and then I'll retire.) We're going to do a series debunking evolution. That would be encouraging. I'm sure all of you would go, "Yeah! Yeah! That's right, man! That's right." Or maybe I [could preach] a sermon [in which] I talk about atheists and how futile it is to be an atheist, and this is why, and I give all these reasoned arguments. You [would think], "Yeah, that is so crystal clear!"

Then, I [could] tell you about different people I've talked with and how God has changed their lives, and they were faithful to read their Bibles, and this happened. You're [thinking], "You know, I need to do that. I need to be like so-and-so." Those experiences are very encouraging to you. All of those things are very encouraging to you, but you know what? No one gets saved. Nobody. Until I do what? Drop the [gospel] bomb. [If] you don't drop the bomb, no one gets saved. The gospel is the only thing that ever saves anybody. Some people get so into the rational approach, the evidential approach, the empirical approach, that they'll sit down, argue with somebody for two hours, leave, and realize, "I forgot to share the gospel." And you know what? The person never gets saved until that happens, and only until that happens. Evidence, experiences, emotions, they never bring anyone to Christ. It's always the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit [that] brings someone to salvation.

This is why the best approach to apologetics is called the "presuppositional approach." Now, I just explained that all those other approaches have presuppositions, but the presuppositional approach [is different in that it] knows that men are corrupt, are spiritually dead, can't be objective, can't

weigh the truth accurately, do not come to the Light [see John 3:20], are repelled by the truth, all of those things. [There are] two primary presuppositions, and they are these: God exists and the Bible is His Word. The presuppositionalist views evangelism knowing those two things: God exists and this Book is the Word of God. [Those are] going to save the person. When [presuppositionalists] look at Acts 17, they say, “Yeah, Paul reasoned with them *from the Scriptures*. He told them biblical truth because he presupposed that God exists and the Bible is God’s Word. But, he didn’t argue with them and try and humiliate them with slick arguments and then end the discussion thinking, ‘I never told them about Jesus, never told them about Jesus dying on the cross for our sins, being buried and [rising] again on the third day and that they need to have faith in that. I forgot that part!’ No, it was always the Word of God. God exists and the Bible is His Word.”

Many of you have probably heard of Answers in Genesis, whose new Creation Museum is really rocking the world. People from literally all over the world are going to that museum, going back home, and writing articles saying things like, “Whoa! Man, they really undid evolution. Man, we disagree, but that was a quality museum.” Answers in Genesis is a great ministry, and it’s a great ministry because [the founders are] presuppositionalists. They know that no amount of evidence is going to get somebody to come to Christ. It’s always the gospel. So, [the Creation Museum] is a gospel-centered, Bible-centered museum, [where] they are proclaiming the truth of God’s Word. The things they show [in the museum] confirm [that] the Bible is true, but they don’t prove it. They’ve already assumed the Bible is true. They’re just showing that, yeah, this is the reality, not, “I am showing you this to prove God exists and the Bible is true,” but [that] “the Bible is true and God exists and this, obviously, confirms it.” It’s a whole different approach. That’s why it’s a great ministry. They understand that the gospel and the gospel alone has the power to save people.

Now, having said that, there’s nothing wrong with using reasoned arguments, and talking about rubidium, strontium, carbon-14 dating, and us-

ing the cosmological argument,⁷ or the watchmaker argument,⁸ or doing all those things. There's nothing wrong with that. There's nothing wrong with telling your testimony. There's nothing wrong with appealing to certain evidences—the empty tomb, the people who were there, whatever—as long as you include the presuppositions that God exists, the Bible is His Word, and people only come to Christ [through] the gospel, and you give them the gospel. You [have] to give them the gospel. I mean, if you're just going to argue with [a person], and leave, going, “Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. I showed him!” Well, that's not evangelism, that's just pride—you wanting to beat up on somebody and have a better argument than he [did]. So, you always have to use the gospel bomb, and then those other approaches can all be used as part of it to build dialogue, relationships, curiosity, or whatever. But, if you want somebody saved, [tell him the] gospel.

Challenging Work Environments

Nine: “What are the biblical principles we should consider when applying for or working at a job that requires looking at immodestly dressed women, or men and women engaging in acts of fornication for the sake of entertainment? Some jobs even require people to look at or work with pornography. Where does one draw the line biblically?”

This is such a good question. I mean, who would ever have a job like that, especially in the entertainment capital of the world? You can't just say, “This is right and this is wrong.” There [are] some principles [to consider], and these are the principles that you need to look at if you're in a job like that, or you're thinking of a career in that area. First, you can't sin for your boss, for money, or for any other reason. That's easy: no sinning. So, if you're going to get a job and that job requires you to sin, you [have] to get a new job. [That's a] no-brainer.

⁷http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosmological_argument

⁸http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Watchmaker_analogy

Second, no one is forcing you to work wherever you're working. You can choose to work in [a] different place. [You might say], "Well, I work in this environment where I only have to sin periodically to make \$300,000 a year. If I quit that job, I probably would only make \$75,000 a year, and I don't want to do that because of the money loss. I'd have to give up my Carrera. I'd have to sell my Malibu house, and that just wouldn't be right." Oh, yes, it would be. What has happened is [that] a lot of people get jobs in the entertainment industry, and they're slowly offered better opportunities for higher pay, but along with that comes greater degrees of compromise, and pretty soon they plunge themselves into sin and ruin. So, you don't want to sell out, sell your soul to Satan, for money, fame, fortune, influence, [or] power. Whatever it be, you cannot sin. Sin is the issue. If you're willing to sell your soul, Satan is willing to pay the price.

Third, it is not sinful to encounter evil. It is not sinful to be around evil, to be exposed to evil. Otherwise, we could never look at each other. We could never go outside. We definitely couldn't go to the mall. I even went to Lowe's yesterday and it was scary there. There are scantily clad women all over the place. It's just the way it is. There are women who have always dressed like harlots, and it will always be that way. This is where it gets very personal, and it becomes a matter of conviction [and] if you can stick to those first principles. You have to ask yourself what your weaknesses [are], what your strengths [are], [and] what your personal convictions [are]. You can't defile your conscience; that's sin. You can't do things you know are wrong; that's sin.

Some jobs require you to be around evil—lots of evil. I was a carpenter for a while, and I'm telling you, [carpenters] have unwholesome speech. Now, I didn't swear and cuss because they did, but I was around that all the time—all the time. It was like working with a bunch of military sergeants in boot camp. The strings of things they would say, would just [be appalling], and they would say them just because they knew it bothered me.

[Take] a police officer [as an example]. Police officers, because they're there to preserve the peace, protect people, and uphold the law, get called in

to the most seedy environments—drug busts, prostitution. They’re exposed to everything—every bit of filth that’s out there. Now, let me ask you this: Would you rather have a police force that was made up of all godly, committed Christians, or [of] unbelievers? That’s a no-brainer, right? You think, “Well, if they’re Christians, they love the Lord, [and] they not only love the Lord, they are going to be honest, they’re not going to take bribes, they’re going to do what’s right. They have this whole other ethic that’s on top of the oath that they take as police officers. It just makes them great officers.” The problem is [that police officers] have to go bust the prostitution ring, and the drug thing, and the child porn thing, and the “this” thing, and the “that” thing, and the “this” thing. [They] are exposed to all of that, and so does that mean [they] are sinning? No. Being exposed to evil is not sinning.

Now, if you lust over those things, then you’re sinning. If you have a weakness in that area, and you just cannot function in there without sinning, then you need to find a new job. But the fact is [that] every job that you will ever get has temptations to sin. It doesn’t matter where you are—it [even] happens in the ministry. It’s no exception. I have people come into my office and tell me things that would make your hair curl or fall out. [They say], “I have something to tell you,” and then I just try not to let my jaw hit the floor when they’re going into the details. I just want to go take a shower sometimes after it’s done. And you know what? I don’t want to hear that stuff, but sometimes you have to hear some of those things in order to help people. It’s just part of the territory. [What are you going to say,] “Sorry, I’m not going to be a pastor because I have to deal with sinners”? See how futile that would be?

So, temptation is not the issue, sinning is the issue. Being exposed to evil is not the issue, sinning is the issue. Whatever job you’re in, whether it’s a projectionist, a film editor, a script writer, whatever, you need to ask yourself: “Can my conscience, informed by the Scriptures, bear up under this? Can I do this without sinning?” That is the difficult thing to decide, and the answer will be different for each person.

One person's going to say, "Listen, man, this is my area of weakness. I could *never* do that."

Another person might say, "I've been doing this for years. It's sick, but I'm able to be a light in a dark place."

[Imagine] if all the grains of salt [see Matthew 5:13] all got around for the salt shaker symposium, and just stayed in the salt shaker [where] it's all nice, and white, and clean. [They would say], "It's so wonderful [in here]. I love being around you because you're so pure and shiny. Let's all take our little lights and crawl under the peck measure and all hide there with our lights [see Matthew 5:15; Luke 11:33]. Maybe we should all go [start] a commune somewhere and have a Christian subdivision, and a Christian town, and a Christian village, with a Christian gas station." Some people take that approach, right? [It's] sanctification by isolation. They have this idea that, "OK, we're going to be a light to the world, we just aren't going to shine in the world. We're going to be salt in the earth, but we're just not going to be in the world." No. The Bible says be in the world, but do not be of the world [see John 15:19; Titus 2:11–12]. It's OK if the boat is in the water, it's not OK if the water gets in the boat. So, you just make sure [when] you're out there floating in the sea of sewage [that you] don't let any get in the boat, and you'll be fine.

[Those are] the very general principles that would go into [determining if a job in a questionable industry is something you should do]. Each person has to decide for himself, before the Lord, about whether he is spiritually fit and able to cope with the amount of evil in his job, because every job [has] it. Every job.

Well, we ran out of time. It's so fun, isn't it? Let me just give you one little parting shot here before we pray. It's this: God's Word has the answers. Did you see how varied these questions were, and how the Scriptures addressed them? If you know Christ, I would encourage you, don't go to the Internet, don't go to a psychologist, don't run to your medical doctor, and don't run to all your unbelieving friends, the newspaper, [or] self-help

books, if you have spiritual problems. Go to the Word of God. Study the Scriptures, and you're going to find the answer.

If you're thinking, "You know, I don't know my Bible that well, and I have these issues and I don't know what to do," then talk to one of the elders or pastors, or just any godly person. Say, "I need some help dealing with my fear, my anxiety, my worry, or my anger," and we can help you. God's grace is sufficient for you [see 2 Corinthians 12:9].

Maybe you don't know Christ, and maybe the reason your life is just so messed up, and you just can't find peace is because the Scriptures say, "There's no peace for the wicked" [see Isaiah 48:22, 57:21]. Maybe you just need to get right with God, and you need to have peace with God, and then everything will start falling into place. That's what you need to realize. We need to use this Book, God's Word, as our recipe book for life. The first place we go [when we think], "Man, I wonder what I should do?" is the Book. "Should I go to this college?" The Book. "Should I marry this person?" The Book. "How do I deal with my anger?" The Book. Anxiety? The Book. It's in here, man. It is in here. God has the answers. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for today, and thank You for a great batch of questions even though they were not related very much. We just thank You that Your Word has the answers. We thank You for the wisdom that it gives us. I pray that all of us would be diligent students of Your Word. If there's someone here who doesn't know You, I pray that his or her heart would be softened, that he or she would realize that he or she needs Jesus Christ. That, Father, He came to earth and died for sinners, that through faith in Him, His death, His burial, His resurrection, that he or she could receive forgiveness of sins and the free gift of eternal life. Father, may anybody who doesn't know You here today cry out in his or her heart so that he or she might live for You, by Your grace. We pray this in Christ's name, Amen.