

# Questions and Answers 2007, Part 2

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This is the last Q&A sermon that we have for August [of] this year, [and] I've got more questions than I think I can answer, but I'm going to try and answer them all—slowly but quickly. If you are a first-time visitor with us, [I] just want you to know [that] usually we're preaching through a passage and doing what we call biblical exposition or expository preaching, but every August we like to take two or three weeks to answer questions that the congregation has submitted. I can never answer them all. Some of them I have already answered, some of them I'm going to answer—I can see them coming up in future texts. Other ones would take too long to answer, and so that kind of narrows them down. I have a great batch of unrelated, but fun, questions this morning that I think will encourage you as we go through and look at them.

## **Divorce**

The first question is: “Does the Bible say anything about a physically abusive spouse being a legitimate reason to seek divorce?” In other words, is physical abuse a legitimate reason for a divorce? The answer is: No. Divorce and remarriage issues are very complicated, though. That is why we are actually going to do a class on it in the key social issues class coming

up September 16, if you want to come and get quite a bit of information, you can get it there.<sup>1</sup> I won't be able to go into it [in] as much detail now.

When you examine all the texts that have to do with divorce and remarriage, divorce, first of all, is allowed, but not commanded, if there is immorality or adultery. In other words, if some sort of sexual sin takes place outside the marriage relationship, there is provision made by God to allow for, but [it is] never commanded, divorce. The reason for that, as Jesus states, is because of the hardness of men's hearts [see Matthew 19:3–12]. In other words, sometimes adultery is so injuring to a person's soul, it is such a violation of the oneness of marriage and the marriage covenant, that God knows people are going to have a hard time forgiving, and so He allows for divorce in the case of adultery. But, He does not command it. We [at Calvary Bible Church] always counsel forgiveness and working through it and maintaining the marriage, but if somebody says, "I just can't do it," then they do have an out there.

The second reason that the Scriptures give [in which divorce is acceptable] is [in a situation where] an unbeliever abandons a believing spouse. Let's say you are a believer and your spouse hates you and your Christianity, can't stand your religiousness, your reading [of] the Bible, your praying, and your going to church, and he says, "I just can't handle it. If you don't stop I'm going to leave." The Bible says, "Let him leave because God has called you to peace, and you are no longer under bondage in such situations" ([see] 1 Corinthians 7:15), which means [that] you can release [the spouse] and not have to be bound to somebody who is persecuting you because of your faith.

However, the high road is always to try and preserve the marriage, to keep it intact, and for people to be saved and godly in that marriage relationship, but it doesn't always work that way. That's [a] pretty easy [answer] for divorce and remarriage and we could move on from here, but it's amazing how many situations come to the elders [that] just don't quite fit things like

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<sup>1</sup>[http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/teaching.aspx/key\\_social\\_issues\\_2007](http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/teaching.aspx/key_social_issues_2007)

[we] wish [they would]. You just wish there was another fifty or sixty texts on divorce and remarriage. It is so convoluted.

For instance, what do you tell a woman who, as an unbeliever, was married to a physically abusive husband. She finally got fed up [and] moved to a different state. There, she met another guy, moved in with that guy, had three children by that guy, and then she became a Christian. Then she comes to me, and she says, “What do I do?” Do you tell her to go back to her first, physically abusive husband? Do you tell her to remain in the immoral relationship? Do you tell her to divorce her physically abusive husband and marry an unbeliever? Do you tell her to leave the adulterous lover, take her children with her, and go back to the abusive husband, or to divorce him and just be a single mom because adultery has occurred? See, that’s what *I* get to deal with. ([Don’t] you want to be a pastor?) That’s when I say, “We’ll talk to the elders about that.”

How would you counsel a woman who comes to you and tells you that she and her husband agreed to get a divorce some ten years previous—they just weren’t getting along, they were both unbelievers, and they just said, “OK,” and they filled out the papers. Each of them thought the other one filed for divorce, but neither of them did. Ten years later, the woman comes to Christ. She decides to ask forgiveness from her ex-husband because she realizes that she contributed to a lot of the things that lead to the divorce. She contacts her ex-husband, and when she does, [she] finds out that her ex-husband is married to a new wife, and both of them have become Christians.

In talking, they discover that neither of them ever filed for divorce and that the guy is still married to the first wife and [also] married to the second wife. The man has two wives now. What do you tell him? “OK, well, since the laws in California do not acknowledge polygamy, you’ve never been really married to that wife you’re now married to, and so, dump that woman and go back to the first one that you’re legally married to”? Or, “Divorce the one that you thought you were divorced from”? “Move to Utah [and] have two wives”? I don’t know. It’s not easy. You think of that verse, “Let each

man remain in the condition in which he was called” [see 1 Corinthians 7:20]. That is scary.

These are the kinds of things that happen with divorce and remarriage. I just give you those two real-life examples that I’ve had to deal with since I’ve been here at Calvary, [which] have been rather difficult. All [of] these verses start going through my mind [as I’m trying to counsel these people]. So, what the elders do is we sit down, talk about it, try and look at all the different principles that apply, and then we try to bring the truth to bear on the situation. [We] explain to the people involved all that there is, and then we say, “You need to make a decision within these parameters,” and then they do.

It’s just not as clear-cut because when men sin they mess up what is ideal. [For instance], do you ever wonder why there [are] regulations for kidnapping in the Old Testament? It’s not because the Old Testament approves of kidnapping, it’s because men kidnap. See, what happens is [that] there is the ideal situation, and then there [are] all of these sinful things that happen that really mess up the ideal. Then you have to have laws to deal with things that are the consequences of sin. It is very hard to unravel some things that people knot up.

In the case of physical abuse [in a marriage], we usually tell the woman right off to call the police and file a report so that the police can then provide some protection. We also counsel for separation for a time. We don’t say, “Go back in there and be a punching bag for Jesus.” We feel that the preservation of life is more important and a higher priority than the institution of marriage. But, what we would say is, “Be separate for a time, [and] get counsel.” [Then] we try and meet with the husband and get his side of the story. You find out things. There’s a verse in Proverbs [that] is like the ultimate counseling verse, and it is this: “A person seems just until another one comes and cross examines [him]” [see Proverbs 18:17]. What [we may] find out is [that] the wife is at home taunting and provoking [the] husband. She’s the button-pushing masochist [who] is tormenting her husband [until] he explodes and beats her. Then she, because she’s starved [for

attention], gets all this attention from people. “Oh, I’m the poor wife who got beat up by my husband.” What you don’t know, [until you’ve spoken to both parties] is everything that has contributed to that [situation]. So you have to get all the information you can [in order] to give wise counsel.

In those cases, we would counsel the woman on her issues, [and] the husband on his issues, if he would have it. We would not encourage the wife to go back into a situation where we thought her life was in danger. [We would] encourage that man to get his act together. One of two things usually happens. He either says, “Well, forget it,” and he bolts, or he gets his act together and they get back together. We always try to counsel to maintain the marriage if at all possible. That is the high road.

## Birth Control

Second: Recently, in response to a key social issues class on abortion,<sup>2</sup> several people asked questions about birth control. I want you to know that I answered this question in the 2004 Q&A [very] brief[ly]. I told you everything the Bible says about birth control, which is nothing, and then [I] moved on. But, everyone wants me to talk about things that aren’t mentioned in the Bible, and this is where it gets a little dicey.

The questions did provoke me to give a response, and I’m going to explain why in a second, but let me explain this other thing first. There is a group of people who are called “post-millennialists,” “praetorists,” “theonomic reconstructions,” [or] “theonomists.” You’re probably thinking, “What is that?” [These] are people who believe that Jesus is not going to come back at any time, that most of the prophecy is already fulfilled in the New Testament, [and] that what [the Church] needs to do is, by our efforts [in] witnessing [and] sharing the gospel, to take over the world [and] bring about a utopian state so that Jesus can come back after we, that is, the Christians, work and establish a kingdom-like environment here on earth so [He]

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can come back and receive the kingdom. There are different [forms] of this thought, and within this thought is [the idea] that because Christians have to take over society, we need to be in control—clear, definitive control—of our children’s education.

Therefore, [the people who believe this] have been the forerunners and the primary movers behind the whole home schooling movement. That is why, within those circles, you read things about classes on logic, and classical education. Their thought [is] that you need to train up a generation of rhetoricians, people who are good spokesmen, [who are] good at logic—politicians—because you need to infiltrate society so you [can] turn the world into a utopian state so Jesus can come back. [This is] post-millennialism, that is, after this time of restoration [the Lord will return].

Now, within that group, there [are] a certain number of [people] I might describe as “rabid home-schoolers,” who pray for the destruction of public school, the total abandonment of public school, and who are promoting this agenda. Now, many people home school and they don’t know anything about what I just said—they are [doing home schooling] because they have decided [that] it’s the best thing for them, and that’s good and fine.

[Now back to the questions...] The questions [that] ask about birth control are very polemical in nature. That is, they are very argumentative, and I’m going to answer them primarily for the fact because they are great examples of what not to do.

I want you to know, I don’t know who asks the questions, but to me, these questions sound like they have come from some [people] who have been exposed to this very bad type of thinking. About five people asked the [same basic] question, [and] I thought, “Man, where is this coming from?” It’s kind of like me going up to one of the elders, and saying, “Have you stopped beating your wife yet?” Do you see how that question is loaded?

The guy says, “Well, yes,” and now he has admitted that he was beating his wife. If he says, “no,” then he’s still beating his wife. Either way [he answers that question], he’s a wife beater, when the reality is he has never

beaten his wife, but I have framed the question in such a way [as] to arrive at an incorrect answer.

Here are the questions. [One]: “Is birth control biblical?” Now, what do you mean by that? The question is almost phrased [to imply] that it’s either biblical or not biblical. It’s either biblical and good, or unbiblical and bad. The fact is, the Bible doesn’t address it. That’s the answer. So, there is no context here. There’s no reference [in the question] to the kind of birth control, the purpose of birth control, the motives, the situation, anything. It’s just, “Is it good or is it bad?” Well, you just can’t answer the question. If you’re [asking], “Does the Bible address [birth control]?” the answer is “no.” [Is it] unbiblical? No. Is it biblical? No. Is it encouraged? No. Is it not encouraged? No. It doesn’t say. OK?

[Two]: “Should we, as Christians, be trying to control birth and practice family planning, or would God be more pleased if we just trusted Him fully and stepped out of the way?” Again, the question forces an incorrect conclusion. It falsely implies that family planning is a refusal to trust God fully, that the two are in opposition to one another, and you can either do family planning, or you can trust God, but not both. The correct answer is: trust God while practicing family planning.

[Three]: “Is family planning wise stewardship, or is it buying into a secular mentality that says there should be a limit on the number of children we have?” Again, the question is loaded, forcing us to one of two incorrect conclusions. It implies [that] family planning is secular. The word “secular” means “not spiritual, worldly, without reference to God or the Word of God.” However, you can practice biblically informed family planning. So, the right answer is not mentioned, though the question is phrased to drive you to one of two incorrect conclusions. Oh, also in [the question it] is implied [that] the world is telling us how many children to have. Well, in China they do, but not in the United States. You can talk to people who think you should have none, one, two, three, four, nine, as many as you can, whatever. There are people who think [that] in general we should have less,

but there are people who think we should have more. It just depends who you talk to—talk to some Catholic people.

Four: “Is there something wrong with not wanting more children?” No. But implied in the question is that people are saying it is wrong. It’s a matter of personal conviction, opinion, and acknowledging that it is God who gives children. Children are a gift from the Lord. Children are not merely [the] outcome of man’s decisions, but we [do] decide to take certain courses of action [that] oftentimes produce children, and if we do that, that is our prerogative.

Five: “If children are a gift from the Lord, what are the implications for a married couple trying to prevent pregnancy for whatever reason?” Again, [this is] a loaded question. The question clearly implies that since children are a gift from the Lord, using birth control is to reject God’s good gift, [and] therefore birth control is evil, which is untrue. Children are not the only blessing from the Lord that we can pursue. I mean, they are a blessing, no doubt. First Corinthians 7[:8] says, “It’s better to be single.” That is a better blessing. So, let’s talk about it. Let me ask you: What’s better, to maintain undistracted devotion to the Lord, or to be consumed about the world and how you may please your spouse and, if you have kids, your kids? There you go. You choose. You see, [this] question [about birth control] implies that one is bad and one is good. Paul does say one is better *if* you can stomach it. If not, do the other thing. He says being single and maintaining undistracted devotion is a better thing if you can endure it. But if you don’t have that gift, then don’t bother. The fact is, being single’s fine, being married is fine, and being married with children is fine.

Six: “Would the correct biblical stance be to leave it all up to God, that He will determine how many children we have, and when?” Now, again, this is kind of a loaded question, and implies that either God determines how many children we have, or we do, when the fact is [that] God does. Children are a gift from the Lord, and there are a lot of people, people in this congregation, who want to have kids and can’t. OK?

So, what you need to realize is you could be a single male, and decide, “I’m not getting married. I’m going to [have a] job, I’m going to take all my money, and I’m going to buy jet skis; four-wheelers; and hunting, fishing, and golfing equipment; and I’m going to live in my little condo, with ultra-modern furniture; have a giant, widescreen TV; and just live for me.” There you go. It’s like the ideal of me-centered life. Then, all of a sudden, you discover that some relative has died and has willed to you his entire estate along with eight children. Now, you’re a single male with eight children. God can do anything [He] wants, and if God has designed that you [will] have children, you’re going to have them.

Some of you are laughing because [you said], “We’re only having two, honey. Right?” Yeah, get the five kids [together]. That’s what happens, right? We had some friends who were trying to have children. They had one child, and then they couldn’t get pregnant [again]. [They] did all the doctor things, and couldn’t get pregnant, and couldn’t get pregnant. Thirteen years later, they had just given up, and figured, “OK, we’re not going to have [more] children,” [and] she got pregnant and had twins.

So, what does that mean? God is in charge. That’s what that means. God is in charge, and we don’t control God; He controls us. Remember what the Scriptures say: “A man plans his ways, but the Lord directs his steps” [see Proverbs 16:9]. You think you’re going to have this many children? Well, a lot of people thought one thing and got another.

Seven: “Would individuals be stepping into God’s decision-making area by using contraceptives, planning when to have children, or having a surgical procedure after a certain number of children to prevent further pregnancies?” Well, again, no one decides anything for God. God is the one who gives [children or doesn’t give children]. A lot of people have had procedures that didn’t work, and taken steps that didn’t work. God does not tell us to have as many children as possible, and though birth control was practiced in biblical times, the Bible doesn’t address [the subject].

Eight: “Isn’t the mindset of using birth control similar to those who have abortions? Don’t those who have abortions do so because they see

children as a nuisance, inconvenience, expense, etc.? The Scriptures tell us that children are a blessing from the Lord [see Psalm 127:3], and ‘blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them’ [see 127:4–5].” Well, the questions imply [that there is only] one motive for abortion [when] there are many. However, some do choose to get an abortion because in their minds children are a nuisance, inconvenience, and expense. So, yes, that is the motive of some, but not all. You could say, yes, that’s [one] of the reasons people don’t have children, but everybody who has children knows [that] they are a nuisance, they are an annoyance, and they are an expense, especially when they become teenagers. That’s just the way it is. It’s not a matter of something good and bad, the fact is, if you pursue having children, you are willing to deal with the annoyance, inconvenience, and expense that comes with them. To most people, the children outweigh the negative aspects. It’s not that those negative aspects aren’t true—they’re there, and you have to be willing to deal with that.

I love gardening. And you know what? If you garden, you have to fight weeds, don’t you? And bugs, and fungus, and powdery mildew, and you have to dig, and hoe, and plant, and harvest, and do all that stuff. Well, that is an annoyance, it’s an inconvenience, [and] it’s an expense. You’re thinking, “OK, I’ve got these two little 69-cent tomato plants here, and I’ve put \$25 worth of worm killer on them, [so] they’re going to be like \$10 tomatoes.” Does that mean gardening is bad? No. Does it mean those who do not garden are rejecting God’s blessing for them? Absolutely. No, [I’m just kidding]. Psalm 67:6 says: “The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us.” Now, what’s wrong with you? You don’t garden? You don’t want God’s blessing for your life? You see? [It’s the] same thing. The fact is: God gives us a lot of great ways to be blessed, and He also gives us opportunities and choices to pursue different blessings. Children are one of the great blessings God offers, but they’re not the only one.

## Fasting

Third question: “First John 2:6 says, ‘The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked,’ speaking of Jesus. Since Jesus made fasting, not just from food, part of His walk on earth, and gave us an example of His disciples doing this after He ascended, what are some of the guidelines for us to integrate fasting into our lives?” Jesus fasted, we know, when He was tempted in the wilderness [see Matthew 4:1–2]. So, He purposely chose not to eat food, [to] become extremely hungry, famished, and weak so that He could feel the full weight and brunt of His temptation in the wilderness. After that, we don’t know that He fasted for anything.

First of all, fasting is not merely abstaining from all food. You need to understand that. A lot of times, we think of fasting as you just stop eating, maybe even stop eating and drinking, and you start living off whatever you’ve got in you. Fasting is to purposely deny yourself food, or some good thing, usually things that bring you pleasure, for some sort of purpose—usually a purpose that you deem is good. [To a similar end], the Scriptures talk about [people] wearing sackcloth [see Jonah 3:5, etc.]. Has anybody here purposely worn sackcloth—you know, sackcloth undies [or a] sackcloth robe that’s all scratchy and itchy? Could you imagine wearing that? You’re mourning because your football team lost, so you’re going to wear sackcloth and put ashes on your head. Hey, they did it in the Bible.

So, how do we deal with that? Well, you could fast, for instance, by deciding only to eat vegetables for a month. You would be fasting from meat and fruits. Or, you could decide that you are going to go on a dinner fast, and maybe for three months not eat any dinner. You have that choice; you can do it. You could decide that you think you’re enslaved to coffee, [so] you’re going to stop drinking coffee for three months [to] make sure that you are in control of coffee and coffee isn’t in control of you. These are the kinds of things that you can fast [from]. So, fasting isn’t always just abstaining from all kinds of food.

Having said that, here are some reasons people fast, some of [which] are extra-biblical and some of [which] are shown in the Bible. [First], fasting can be used to detoxify the body. Those who know about health issues know that when you quit eating or you only drink liquids—or certain liquids—what happens is it cleanses your kidneys, and your liver, and your digestive tract, and it can help purify your body. Some people do it on a regular basis for that reason.

Second, fasting can be used for the discipline of denying oneself. This is when you decide that you need to practice saying “no” to sin. Now, I don’t know about you, but in my life, sins are always tempting. Aren’t they? They always want you to engage in something that gives you pleasure, right? Well, food is a great way to learn how to say “no” to your flesh because your flesh says, “Oh, no one’s around. Look at that big plate of soft, chewy chocolate chip pecan cookies. You could go in the refrigerator and get that big glass of milk and pound the whole plate down.” See, those are the kinds of things your flesh is crying out to you [for]. So, food is a good way to learn how to deny yourself. It can be a very spiritual exercise because what you find is very close parallels between temptation to sin and temptation to eat. We have to eat, so there is this craving, this inner longing to have food, and when you want some really nice food but decide to have celery sticks [or] something boring, why would you do that? [You would do it] because it’s good to learn how to say “no” to your appetites. That’s why.

There’s a conspiracy here among the congregation to kill Brock, Tim, [and I] off because people bring stuff up into the office that’s really good—tasty, but bad for you. People bring up all sorts of fudge, cookies, and chocolate-covered peanut clusters. I shouldn’t even describe them to you [because] it’s almost lunchtime and I know you’re probably going, “[Stop!]” They bring all this up there, and they spread it all out. You come back from a leg stretch, and all of a sudden, there it is, out there, and no one’s watching. Sometimes the best thing to do is bend over and just smell that yummy sugar, and look at those yummy little peanut clusters, or those yummy little pastries, get a good whiff of them, and then walk back in your

office and not touch them. Why? [It's] because it's good to be able to deny yourself what you want. That is a good practice because you have to deny yourself sin and the parallels are virtually identical. Fasting can be used to deny yourself.

[Third], fasting can be used in exercising self-control. The Bible says we aren't to be "mastered by anything" [1 Corinthians 6:12]. Anything. If you look at your life, you [may] realize, "This one thing is mastering my life, maybe I should stop for a while." For instance, I love coffee, I love drinking coffee, and in seminary, the temptation is to just drink coffee all the time, eat a bunch of junk food, stay up too late, get up too early, and kill yourself off. At the very beginning of seminary, I realized I was drinking way too much coffee—my heart was pounding when I was trying to sleep, I couldn't sleep when I needed to sleep, and so I just decided, "You know what I'm going to do? I'm not going to drink any coffee except [during] mid-term and final weeks—two weeks a year." Why? [It's] because it's good to use self-control, to see all those students over there with that hot, steaming cup of coffee, and you're drinking water. It's good. That is a good thing. That is a good spiritual discipline.

Every single morning, you get up, you go to Starbucks, you stand in line with that same group of people, you get your whatever—triple tall, thin, mocha machi-whatever—and you drink it. Why don't you [stop doing] that for six months? Why not? It would be good. It would be a good spiritual exercise just to deny yourself. Just try it. I double-dog dare you. ([You can] give me your Starbucks card.) Yeah, that's how it works. See, this is a good thing—it's good to learn how to deny yourself pleasures that you want. I think it was John MacArthur who said that he likes to say "no" to something he wants every day. That's a good thing to practice. So, fasting can be used in that.

[Fourth], fasting can be used to lose weight. Do you know what diets are? Fasts, that's what they are. You're fasting—not eating meat, not eating vegetables, not eating carbs, not eating whatever. It's all part of a fast—it's a controlled fast. Some people do it to lose weight.

Fifth, people fast in response to the death of a loved one, or some grief that they're suffering. We see this in the Bible. Some king dies, or some big judgment is planned, like [with] Nineveh—"In [forty] days Nineveh will be overthrown," and then what does the whole nation do? The Ninevites go into fasting and it diverts the judgment of God [see Jonah 3]. There is a time when you can fast to show respect, devotion, [or] that you're serious about something.

There are reasons not to fast. One: God does not accept our fasting if we are living in unconfessed sin. So, if you think you're going to do some spiritual fasting to seek out some prayer request, or some sin issue that you're dealing with in your life—you're thinking, "Man, I want to deal with this"—but you've got other sin that you're not confessing, don't even go there because it doesn't work. For instance, in Jeremiah 14:12, God says:

When they fast, I am not going to listen to their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I am not going to accept them. Rather I am going to make an end of them by the sword, famine and pestilence.

Why? They're fasting. Yeah, but they're living in unconfessed sin, and God says, "Don't go crawling to Me in your fasting condition when you have these sin issues in your life. You deal with those first, and then, if you want to come to Me in prayer [and] fast[ing], that's fine."

[Two]: God does not accept our fasting if we fast out of dead ritual. Sometimes you can just get into the habit—maybe every Thursday is your fast day, or whatever. Or, yearly on a certain day, you have decided to fast, [but] you've done it for so long [that] it becomes a dead ritual. This is what happened to Israel when they were in Babylon for those seventy years. They observed fasts twice a year that weren't commanded in the Law of Moses. This is what God says in Zechariah 7:5–6: "Say to all the people of the land and to the priests, 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months these seventy years, was it actually for Me that you

fasted?” And the implied answer is [that] it wasn’t. “When you eat and drink, do you not eat for yourselves and do you not drink for yourselves?” In other words, He’s saying, “You know what? You fasted, but you fasted for yourselves. You fasted because you wanted to come back. You fasted because you wanted your way, you wanted to be restored to the land, you want what you wanted.” That is not the reason for spiritual fasts. God’s saying, “You should have been fasting because you sinned against Me! You should have been fasting because you were sorry you had rebelled against Me to the [point that] I had to drive you out of your land. But did you do that? No. You ate and drank, trying to fast, in order to get what you wanted from Me.”

It’s kind of like the prisoner who [is] interview[ed] periodically [to] see if [he] can [be] put on parole. What does the prisoner say? He says whatever they want to hear, right? Why? [It’s] because he wants out. It’s not that he’s sorry for his crime, [but] what he wants is out of jail. He does what he needs to do to get what he wants. Well, that’s what the Israelites were doing, and that’s what a lot of people do sometimes in their fasting and spiritual pursuits—they want something from God. It’s like a person who’s not getting what he wants in his life, so he starts going to church on a regular basis, praying, putting in prayer requests, so that God will fix his life and make it like he wants so that he can depart from the church and live in the world again until the next crisis comes along. Don’t fast for that reason.

[Three]: God does not accept our fasting if we fast to be seen or noticed by men. [Imagine] you go out in the foyer, and there’s this person out there [moaning and groaning]. [You ask], “What’s wrong? Why are you rubbing your stomach? Do you have a stomachache?”

“No, I’m fasting.”

“Well, why are you telling me?”

“Oh, I just have issues. I’m trying to devote myself to the Lord.” What is that? Jesus tells us what it is in Matthew 6:16–18, when He says:

Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

[Four]: Jesus said [that] His disciples would fast after He left them in Matthew 9:14–15: “Then the disciples of John came to Him,” that is, Jesus, “asking, ‘Why do we and the Pharisees fast,’” it was common in that culture, “‘but Your disciples do not fast?’” Good question. “And Jesus said to them, ‘The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.’” The point there is that the reason they would fast is for mourning purposes. He says, “You don’t mourn when the bridegroom is there.” So that implies the motive of the Pharisees and the disciples of John were mourning, mourning over sin—the sin of the nation, whatever it is, the judgment of God [is] obviously evident in the presence of the Romans controlling them.

[Five]: The apostles practiced fasting in Acts 13:[2]. It says: While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’” So, here we see the apostles praying and fasting, and then that’s when God tells them what He wants them to do. In Acts 14:23, it says: “When they had appointed elders for them in every church, *having prayed with fasting*, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed” [emphasis added]. The whole point here, which is great to get—it’s really apart from fasting—is that they felt that choosing church leaders was so important that they prayed and fasted before they made that decision. And that’s what they did. That’s in Acts in the New Testament era.

So, yes we are to follow Jesus' example, yes we are to walk in the same manner as Jesus walked, but that does not mean we are to do everything Jesus did. Jesus raised the dead [see John 11:14–44], Jesus walked on water [see Matthew 14:25–32], Jesus restored sight to the blind man [see Mark 10:51–52], Jesus uttered things and did things that only God could do. That is something we cannot model ourselves after. So, we could, yes, model ourselves after Jesus' fasting before entering into the desert, so you could go into the Mojave Desert, sit there for forty days, and have a fast—I wouldn't recommend it—so you could be tempted. But, you know, if you want to get to that place, that's fine.

But fasting is fine. You can do it for some of the extra-biblical reasons I gave you, or for some of the biblical reasons. If you do it for a biblical reason, don't tell anybody, and don't look all gaunt and [start moaning]. [If] people keep looking [at] you, [and asking], "Man, what is that growling inside you?" just keep looking forward. All right, so fasting that's pretty much as much as I could come up with.

## Night Monster

Four[th question]: "What is the 'night monster' mentioned in Isaiah 34:14?" Is that a good question or what? Guys like monsters. [It's] the monster question. Isaiah 34:14 says: "The desert creatures will meet with the wolves, The hairy goat also will cry to its kind; Yes, the night monster will settle there And will find herself a resting place." A woman night monster, no less! That is interesting, isn't it? Sometimes you're reading your Bible, and you're going, "What is *that*?" [and you put a] question mark [and] write [it] in the back [of your Bible to save] for the Q&A time in August.

Basically, if you look in the context [of Isaiah 34:14], you'll see that the whole chapter is talking about the judgment of the nation, specifically Edom [see 34:5, 8], and God is saying that He is going to bring such total,

utter, and sustained desolation to Edom that it's going to be a haunt for things He mentions—[the] pelican, the owl, the jackal, the ostrich, the wolf, and the hairy goat, which He mentions in the preceding context. The whole point is this: When this judgment happens, it is going to be so complete, and thorough, and lasting, that the ruins are going to be nothing more than a place for wild animals.

Now, the question is: What is the night monster? The night monster could be an allusion to a well-known myth of Isaiah's time that there was a female night demon with wings and long, flowing hair, [which] supposedly seduced lonely travelers. There was a similar kind of myth that the Persians had even before that, [the] *mardkhora*, a creature with the head of a man, porcupine quills, the body of a lion, [and] a scorpion tail, which supposedly ambushed people and devoured them. Isaiah's reference, though, to the "hairy goat," might help us better understand this because the "hairy goat" is actually a phrase used to describe demons in Leviticus 17:7 and is translated "satyr"—a "satyr" is one of those half-goat, half-man-type creatures—in 2 [Chronicles] 11:15, and was supposedly this demon-man creature. Of course, both [of these refer to] mythological [creatures]—not the demons, but the creatures.

I think what's happening is Isaiah is just merely saying [that Edom is] going to be so wasted [that] it's going to be a place for wild animals, demons, and monsters. I think he's just using it figuratively of that. So, there you go: night monster.

## **Blame for Sin**

[Fifth]: "Did Jesus accept the blame for our sin as His own? We know that Jesus covers our sin, but are we still to blame? Do we still carry the blame even though we no longer carry the punishment for our sins and God sees us as righteous through Christ?" Well, this is a good question, and it really hinges on your understanding of what it means to be in Christ positionally,

and what you are in reality as a Christian who is in Christ. It has to do with what you will be like in the age to come, and what you are right now. [First], you have to understand this. Upon placing our faith in Jesus Christ, we are completely forgiven; justified; made holy; the righteousness of Christ is reckoned, or imputed, to us; we are perfect; without sin; sanctified; made holy; righteous as Jesus is righteous. When I say “positionally,” I mean as God sees a person who has placed his faith in Jesus Christ unto salvation—God sees him “in Christ as perfect.”

Now, that’s one thing. Second, when Christ died on the cross, He took our blame, our guilt, our punishment upon Himself. He received from the Father that wrath, punishment, [and] judgment that we deserve. He became, the Scriptures say, “sin for us,” [which is] not [to say] that He became a sinner, but [that] He was treated as the sinner and received the judgment of God.

Practically, though, in this life, we are still sinners. Every Christian knows that. We live in the presence of sin, and are far from perfect, committing sins every day. When we sin, we are always to blame for our sins. God is never to blame for our sins. “But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust,” James says in James 1:14. And so, it’s always your fault, never anybody else’s. Though you are saved from the eternal consequences of sin, as a Christian, you are not saved from the temporary consequences. [If] I get mad [and] shoot somebody, he’s shot. If I kill him, I go to jail. It has nothing to do with me being forgiven in eternity, but I still go to jail, right?

So, your sins now have consequences in two ways. One: they have consequences in that they cause you to be estranged from God. It’s not that God leaves [you], you leave God. When you sin, you choose to turn your back on God. That’s why you need to repent and confess your sins whenever you commit [them] in order to stay facing toward God and receiving His blessing. So, you forfeit the blessing of having a close walk with God, [of] being filled with the Spirit. [Two], your sins in this life affect how you will be rewarded in heaven. We see this from different parables. How peo-

ple live here on earth [is] a training ground [for] their rewards [in heaven], but your salvation is never in jeopardy. It's never a matter of receiving forgiveness. It's never a matter of God turning His back on you; it's a matter of you being right with God or not [being] right with God.

So, in this life, you're a sinner, and you will sin. Keep your sins confessed, and you will have that relationship with God that He wants you to have. [If] you live in unconfessed sin, it's like turning your back on God, and, of course, you will feel far from God. You're always to blame for your sin.

## **The Bride of Christ**

[Sixth]: “The Church holds the position of the Bride of Christ. Where, and in what position, does that place Old Testament and Tribulation saints? Are they also the Bride of Christ, or will they be considered different from us in heaven and eternity?” What you need to understand is that there are different times in history when people have become Christians. There are Old Testament saints—those are people from Adam and Eve all the way to the starting of the Church. It's that time period when people believed God and it was reckoned to them as righteousness [see Genesis 15:6; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23]. They didn't have all the details we have, but they believed and they were saved by grace through faith in the promises of God, and what they knew up until that time. Those are Old Testament saints.

Once Christ died and at Pentecost the Church was born, then we enter what is called the “Church age.” The Church age lasts from the beginning of the Church all the way through to the Rapture, [which is] the beginning of the Tribulation. The Tribulation is [a] seven-year period when God pours out judgment on the earth. That is the Church age. Then, you have the Church age ending with all the believers being raptured into heaven, [and] then you go into the Tribulation. In the Tribulation, you have people who also come to the Lord. They are Tribulation saints. Some of them live to

enter, as mortals, into the 1,000-year reign of Christ. They are mortals who then have children, and those children, some of them, become believers, and so those are millennial saints.

Now, when you look at the book of Revelation, which teaches us about the Tribulation, what you discover is something rather interesting. At the beginning [of the book], it has all those letters to the churches, and the Church is the big discussion. The Church is mentioned in Revelation 3:22, and then after that the Church isn't mentioned any more until after the Tribulation is over in Revelation 19:7. What's interesting is that all the time when it's talking about and detailing the judgments of God on the earth, it never mentions the Church. But all of a sudden [it] appears after the Tribulation, which is when the Second Coming happens.

In Revelation 19:14, we read: "And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses." So, when Jesus comes back, He's with this army, an army that has been clothed with white garments, and they are riding horses coming back. They don't have any implements of war because only Jesus is doing the fighting. Who are those people? Some people said those are angels, but when you look at the Scriptures—and we don't have time to go through all of them—you find out that the saints are those who are clothed in white raiment by Christ. [For instance], when Joshua, the high priest in the vision in Zechariah 3, stands before the Lord and Satan is there to accuse him, what happens? [The Lord] takes off [Joshua's] old garments and He clothes him with white raiment. That's how the saints are described, and these same people are described in Revelation 17:14, as the "chosen and faithful," which is obviously a reference to Christians. So, at the end of the Tribulation, when Christ returns, who is with Him? The Church. That's one of the reasons we [at Calvary Bible Church] believe in pre-Tribulation rapture.

So, there are Old Testament saints, Church age saints, Tribulation saints, and millennial saints. Though they all receive salvation and they are all blessed, having different amounts of knowledge [according to] the time

they lived in, they all get to heaven, and they all enjoy some of the same promises given to them as believers. But they are not the same.

## Church Community

Seven: “How can we make Hebrews 3:13–14 happen in our local congregation?” (You’re thinking, “What is that?” We’ll read it in just a second.) “Often I feel like a lone ranger Christian as opposed to a part of a body, even though [I am] plugged into different programs and have many friendships at Calvary.” In Hebrews 3:13–14, we read this:

But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.

This is one of the many “one another” texts in the Bible. There are lots of them. And you know what? We *are* doing the one another texts here at Calvary. As a matter of fact, it’s happening right now. You are receiving the blessing of my spiritual gifts. Earlier we did corporate worship, and before that, you probably talked to people in the hallway, and we had the greeting time. All of this is part of the one-anothers, where you talk to people, get to know people, whatever. So, it’s happening, and it’s happening a lot, but it’s not happening as much as it could. Part of the reason is [that] we live in a society that does not encourage community interaction. You know how it is. Your neighbor shows up, the garage door goes up, in the BMW goes, and [the door] goes down. It doesn’t open up until the next morning at 5:45, when the door goes up, he drives out, and he leaves. Then he comes back the next night at 6, and that’s what happens all week until Friday when you get home a little late because the traffic is so bad. Then you try and go

out and have fun, and you do that until late, and then you sleep in because you're tired. Then you get up on Saturday, you go out and have breakfast, and go shopping, and you stay up late again. A lot of times you never see your neighbors. You wonder, "Are they ever home?"

Now, let's just say, for instance, that we would take everybody in this room right now, everybody who is at church right now, and we just transport all of us into the middle of Kansas, since that's where Pastor Dave is going. [Then], we establish a town there that's like our own little Christian commune. In this town, there's no TV, no DVDs, no Internet, no telephone. At nighttime, you can either read a book, or you can sit out on the porch and whittle a stick. Then you look across the way, and you say, "Hey, neighbor!" and you wander on over. Why? [It's] because there's nothing else to do. You say, "So, how are you doing?" as you're whittling your stick.

He says, "Oh, I'm just sitting here on the porch. It's a nice evening," and you chat. That's how it used to be. But now, there are so many things in the world that keep people from interacting socially that we can just stay in our houses and virtually live [without contact with other people]. If you have an Internet connection, they'll deliver your groceries, deliver everything. You even have Internet doctor visits. You can do anything you want. There's just everything—it comes to you from the Internet. You can sit [in] there, put plywood on your windows, and never go out.

We live in a culture that doesn't really encourage community. Having said that, if you're plugged in and you're feeling like the lone ranger, it could be for several reasons. It may be [that] you have unspoken expectations. [For instance], you want people to seek you out, ask you over, and get to know you. You know what? You need to do that to them. When you have a big church, you miss people, and so you need to take the initiative, you need to go up to people, and say, "Hey, my name is so-and-so. How would you like to go out to lunch? How would you like to come over for a barbecue?" You make the effort, and you ask the questions.

We tell our kids [that] if we have people over, don't just slump there and [act] like, "Oh, brother." Ask [the guests] questions: "So, how long have you

been at Calvary Bible Church? When did you come to know the Lord? Tell me about your salvation experience. What have you been reading in your Bible lately? Are you reading any good books? Where are you serving in the church? What's that ministry like?" You ask questions about stuff that matters. You get involved. If you do more of that, then you make it happen. And you know what? There are plenty of opportunities to make it happen. Don't just sit there in the corner with your arms crossed and a scowl on your face, going, "Hey, this is an unloving church." Because you know what? You're part of it—a grumpy part. So make sure that that's not the case.

Another [reason] that the lone ranger [feeling] could happen [is] if you have a ministry—it might even be an important ministry—[in which] you don't interact with people. For instance, Larry Swanson sits in this tiny, hot closet, and he make copies of CDs and puts labels on them so you can all be blessed by having CDs of the sermon. Well, no one else is in that closet. (No one else could fit in that closet.) And so, if he wants to have good social action and good one-anothering, it's not happening in the closet, where he's doing his ministry. He has to get out of there, and he has to talk to people, have people over. It's just the way it is. So, some ministries [have] you serving the body, maybe in a very important way, but [you are] by yourself. If that's the case, you need to take the initiative to get out and have people over, and get involved in people's lives.

If you want more on that [subject], you can listen to the two sermons on one-anothering, on being involved in church from the church series I did

a while back—“You and the Church”—or you can listen to Tim’s recent message on one-anothering and figure that out.<sup>3</sup>

## God’s Sovereignty in Our Actions

[Eighth]: “In Ephesians 2:10, it says: ‘For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we should walk in them.’” (Now, I want you to listen closely, because this question has twists and turns. It actually makes sense. I always wonder, “Is this a seminary student who’s trying to stump me?” It’s in multiple pieces; it’s pretty fun.) [The question continues]: “Does the sovereignty of God for Christians spill over into our daily actions to such a degree that He will make sure we walk in each and all the good deeds that He has predestined? For, in Romans [8:28] it teaches that we know that ‘God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called,’ etc., and the Ephesians verse above, says [that] God prepares the good works beforehand, so does that guarantee that we will do them? Or, is there still an element of free will in our daily living so that God prepared opportunities for good works beforehand and He works in us to want to do them, and He gives us the power through the Holy Spirit to perform them, but we, in some cases, may still need to, on our own, yield our will to His in order to fulfill them, meaning, we can resist and refuse to fulfill those good works that He has prepared us beforehand to do?”

Now, that’s such an easy question, should I even bother? No, [just kidding]. First of all, if you want to get more information on this, you can

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<sup>3</sup> “You and the Church”

1. <http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2007/20070121>

2. <http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2007/20070128>

“Life Among the Body Parts”

• <http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2007/20070805>

listen to the four sermons on the sovereignty of God from the Psalm 145 series on the attributes of God. You can get it on the Internet, where I talk about this in some detail and from different angles.<sup>4</sup>

First, I want to say this. The text that you mentioned—Ephesians 2:10—should read: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” [emphasis added]. In the old New American Standard Bible, it said that “we *should* walk in them,” and almost all new translations say that “we *should* walk in them.” But if God prepared beforehand that we would do them, we’re going to do them. So, I think the best translation is “we *would* walk,” not “we *should* walk.” One puts the emphasis on man’s desire to maybe align himself with God’s eternal decree, and the other one is that God is sovereign and directing men to fulfill His eternal decree. We all know that “a man plans his ways, but” what? “the Lord directs his steps” [see Proverbs 16:9]. There we go.

We know from Ephesians 1:11 [that] God “works all things after the counsel of His will.” [First, we must note that] God [Himself] is not totally free. [The question] talked about freedom, and I just want to make sure we understand freedom of the will. It’s really, as Luther said, the “bondage of the will.” You need to realize that before we’re believers, the only thing we do is sin because we aren’t living for the glory of God, nothing we do pleases God, and so we can’t understand the things of God [see 1 Corinthians 2:14]; we are spiritually dead, we cannot please God [see Romans 8:8], we can’t save ourselves, we can’t atone for our sins [see 1 Peter 2:24], we can’t turn ourselves into a chair, and we can’t create things out of nothing,

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<sup>4</sup> Attributes of God, Psalm 145 series, The Sovereignty of God:

1. <http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2003/20030119>
2. <http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2003/20030126>
3. <http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2003/20030216>
4. <http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2003/20030302>

like God does. We can't. So, we're not free. We're only free in respect to what God has created us to be free in. Even God Himself is not totally free. God cannot lie. He is not free to lie. He is not free to break His promise. Can God make a stone so big He can't move it? Well, the answer is: God would never do that because that would be a contradiction of His nature, and God never contradicts His nature.

So, what we need to realize is that when we're talking about freedom here, we're talking about, for an unbeliever, only freedom to sin, [and] for a believer, freedom to obey or disobey within the realm that God gives him the strength. Now, the believer is set free from the power of sin, so he can choose to believe and obey the truth. However, even when a believer disobeys God, he has not put himself outside of God's eternal decree, which includes everything that happens. He puts himself outside of God's revealed will, [found] in the Word of God, but not His *eternal* will and decree. So, keep that in mind.

That is why [with] believers, even though they sin, God still causes all things to work together for their good. Why? [It is] because of providence and concurrence. (You can listen to those messages [I mentioned] to find out about that. If you still don't understand after [listening to] those messages, you'll just have to wait until you get to heaven and you can ask Jesus.) The fact is, the sovereignty of God does not nullify human responsibility. It does not take away choices from us that God has granted. You still have a choice, you still need to do what's right, and if you don't, you are to blame.

However, those good works that God has prepared beforehand, you're going to do them because God has made sure of that. Just like Jesus was going to come in, [the people] were going to cry out, and say, "Hosanna in the highest" [see Matthew 21:9; Mark 11:10], and He was going to get crucified. Nothing could stop that. Demons tried to stop that, Satan tried to stop that, Judas tried to stop that, the high priests [tried to stop that]. There were so many people against Jesus, and yet what happened? Peter says in Acts [4:28] that, yes, it is clear that the Jews, and Pilate, and the Romans, the Gentiles did "whatever Your hand... predestined to occur."

Concurrence—oh, man, it’s a good doctrine. [It’s] complex. You can study about it later.

## Jesus as a Baby

[Ninth]: “Can you explain the psychology of Jesus as a baby? Was He fully aware? How are we to understand His humanity and divinity when He was a baby? Where was the Word of God in baby Jesus? Was baby Jesus ignorant? Was He growing in wisdom?” Well, let me just answer these questions.

“Was He fully aware?” No. He was like every other baby who is getting a clue.

“How are we to understand His humanity and divinity?” I’ll talk about this in a minute.

“Where was the Word of God in baby Jesus?” Jesus was the Word of God in flesh.

“Was baby Jesus ignorant?” In His humanity, yes.

“[Was He growing] in wisdom?” Yes.

Here it is: When Jesus was born, He was fully God, which means He was all-knowing, right? But, part of the humiliation of the incarnation was His choosing not to exercise His divine attributes in submission to the Father. So, He had to learn how to talk [and] walk. He wasn’t glowing. He didn’t come out of the womb, saying, “Oh, Mom, it’s good to meet you. I’ve been around before creation, and if you have any questions, I can answer them.” No, He cried and did what all babies do at that age. He was fully human, grew up just like a human, did all those things. Luke 2:40 says, “The Child,” speaking of Jesus, “continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.” He grew in wisdom—that is, the application of truth. [It’s] not that He ever disobeyed God, but as He learned the truth, He kept applying it. “And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52), which means He just kept growing physically. He was fully human,

just like us. He didn't walk around with some glow about Him, or exercising all of His omniscience. ([A cellphone rings in the background.] If He had a cellphone He would have turned it off.)

## Could Christ Sin?

[Tenth]: "If Christ was fully God, was it even possible for Christ to sin? In other words, do we affirm His impeccability, or that He was peccable (Hebrews 4:15; Luke 4; James 1:13)?" I won't use the stainless steel pole analogy. You don't know that one? [Somebody's] going, "No! Don't do it!" OK, Jesus being God could not sin because God cannot sin. If you allow for Jesus to be able to sin, then you are affirming [that] He is not God. Jesus, in His humanity, could have His flesh appealed to, just like us; could be tempted, just like us, in every way that we are tempted—Hebrews 4:15—but He could not sin. He was impeccable, as that word is used [in the question].

## Future Temple Sacrifices

And finally, [eleventh]: "In Ezekiel 30–36, there is a mention of sacrifices being made again in the temple when Christ sets up His future kingdom. If Christ's sacrifice was finished, why would God need to do that—have animal sacrifices? Will this be a memorial to the remnant, or a representation of God's presence? What's the deal on this?" Well, first of all, the deal is it's not Ezekiel 30–36. Ezekiel 40–48 is what talks about the millennial temple. And, yes, sacrifices are mentioned. People have always asked, "Why? Why are they doing sacrifices?" The answer is this: Why did they do sacrifices in the Old Testament? [It was] in anticipation of the death of Christ, right? The author of Hebrews makes that clear. Why do we celebrate communion? [It is] in remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ, right?

Ezekiel tells us that during the millennium, God will assign animal sacrifices so that Jews can be reminded of the death of Christ by killing those animals. In the Old Testament, animal sacrifice never took away sins, it was in anticipation of the future death of Christ. In the millennium it happens in retrospect, in hindsight, in remembrance of Christ. Bingo.

Well, we're out of time. It's been fun. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for Your goodness to us, and we just thank You for these fun questions. I thank You for all the people who asked them, regardless of their reasons and motives. It was fun to go through them. We are thankful that Your Word has the answers. We're also just asking You, Father, if there is anybody here who doesn't know You, who has never placed his or her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who has never acknowledged that he or she is a sinner, that he or she needs salvation, and that Jesus is the only way, that right now in his or her heart, he or she would place his or her faith in Christ alone to save him or her, he or she would trust that He died on the cross for sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day, and that that finished work, if faith is placed in it, will save him or her. So, Father, may he or she turn from his or her sins, and receive the Lord Jesus Christ and become your child. For the rest of us, may we leave here remembering what was read this morning, that 'man does not live by bread alone, but every word that proceeds out of Your mouth' [see Matthew 4:4]. We thank You for what we have, in Christ's name, Amen.

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