

Book Club: Taking God Seriously

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Date: 04 March 2018

Preacher: Canon Dr. J.I. Packer

[0 : 0 0] All right, so we are all here today to talk about, listen to, readings from Taking God Seriously, Vital Things We Need to Know by J.R. Packer.

It's a great book. I know some of you, fabulous, fabulous book. Many people have read it, some of you have not. Even if you have not read it, it's not time limited, you can read it this week.

You can read it this week and ask more questions next week. When did he make the book? We'll save that for the question time, because I don't know. But I'm here just to introduce him and to thank him for coming to these, what we now call the Fireside Chats with Dr. Packer, which I absolutely love.

We are so blessed to have him here today, so please join me in welcoming him. Thank you for your welcome.

Yes. Alexandra, as you all of you have spotted, is a great pusher.

[1 : 1 6] And she has pushed me into doing this talk this morning. And she will doubtless push me again, unless, of course, I leave this world first.

We shall see. But seriously, I am glad to be asked to speak about this book, because what's in the book is of great importance to me.

And as I go through life, I would much rather spend my talking time dealing with matters of great importance than in simple gossip or whatever else on that level.

So, let me say right at the outset that I'm going to begin by zeroing in on that word seriously and asking you to consider what's involved in taking anything or anybody seriously.

I don't think that it's language that we use very often. I don't think that it's language that we use very often.

[2 : 3 8] And that's a great point. And that perhaps is because in this day and age, a lot of people exist without being serious, really serious, about anything.

So, they have no use for the word. That is my feeling, honestly, as a Christian, minister, someone who moves around hoping to persuade folk to bow before the Lord Jesus in the way that he himself taught me to do, as I think, as I think, as I think, as I have to describe it, something like 70 odd years ago.

What's it mean, I ask, to take anybody seriously? I don't think it's a difficult question to answer once one faces it.

A serious person, a person who has a right to be taken seriously, is someone whose word you can trust because they mean what they say, and someone who will perform what they promise.

And that's where we are, I believe, with our God, with our Savior, though it's not always where we are with each other, let's face it frankly.

[4 : 25] So, if one asks about taking people seriously, well, it's good, I think, to begin with the question, well, what does it mean for me, what would it mean for me to take myself seriously?

And in what I've just said, I believe I've given the true answer to that question. So, let me say, straight out, I try to take myself seriously, and I hope you do.

I intend to go on taking myself seriously, as seriously as I can, and I hope that you will also.

And I would like to see a wave of concern for seriousness invading our society, invading society all over the globe, and producing a generation in which everybody meant what they said, and everybody laboured through life to do what they've committed themselves to.

A world, in other words, in which taking oneself and others seriously is, from one standpoint, the name of the game. Now, against that background, for which I make no apology, indeed, I hope you share it, frankly, I raise and will answer the question about this book.

[6 : 25] Where did it come from? Taking God Seriously is its title. Where did that come from? And what is the book written to do?

By the way, let me pause over that last question and say, real authors, most of the time anyway, write not so much to express themselves as to do things in the form of persuasion to other people.

you write stuff because you believe that this stuff that you write is important and that it makes a difference for good to the life of the people to whom it's directed.

And if you don't write with that serious purpose in mind, well, for clarity's sake, I would say, let us call you a journalist and keep the word writer or author for people who are serious in the manner described.

I hope I don't poke anybody in the metaphorical eye by saying that. I mean, we all of us from time to time are asked to write utility paragraphs about this, that, and the other, I'm talking about the kind of writing.

[8 : 20] I'm talking about the kind of writing which shows that the writer himself is serious and is writing seriously about serious matters.

Okay, well, that's the frame of reference. That's the wavelength, if you like, on which this book is pitched.

The human facts about its origin are simple. A few years ago, as all of you will remember, I'm sure, the Diocese of New Westminster split because of the pressure imposed, indirectly but potently, by the last bishop, Bishop Michael Ingham, who was pushing through, in Synod, a measure which would the distinction between the two genders as irrelevant for marriage.

I mean, same-sex marriage was just as legitimate, said he, and just as good every way as, well, I see it, two-sex marriage, marriages, and the Synod, I think it's fair to say, appreciated that bringing this measure back for the third time, after twice the Synod had rejected it, showed that the bishop was very anxious that it be passed, and he had made no secret of the fact that this was part of his understanding of what Christian leadership involved.

You abolished, that is, as soon as you could, the irrelevant rejection of the same-sex marriage, as being, not, indeed, part of a true Christian heritage, but as an eccentricity of a culture which had developed under the influence of historic Christianity, and had picked up this idea inappropriately, but believing it to be part of Christianity, and it was time to make the adjustment.

[11 : 07] Well, as I said, this is what he was concerned to do, and we, some of us, anyway, about a hundred of us, actually, who were members of the Synod of this diocese.

We saw it coming, we made our plans, and we walked out of the Synod to show the depth of our disagreement, and to show that the disagreement went so far as to make it impossible for us to work together, and I don't think the bishop had expected that, he didn't look as if he had, but, yes, we walked out, and that was the beginning of Annick, of which we, you know, we and St. John's are part now, and the beginning, too, of outright separation in North America over this issue, which has resulted in the formation of ACNA, the Anglican Communion, in North America, which, in case you didn't know, is being blessed, and is flourishing most impressively, particularly south of the border.

yes, Canadians are sometimes slow, and the leads are given from south of the border, but we ought not to reject them when they are leads that express truth, and this, it seems to me, is something that, little as we like it, was made inescapable for us by the providence of God, and now, we are able to, well, we are able to say, we are bound to say, look, we believed that we were called to take God seriously, and in Scripture, there's no question that God is serious about his rejection of same-sex partnerships.

When he created the two sexes, the two genders, it was for the purpose of procreation and the development of the race.

That is still what he seeks, a man and a woman joining together, and as a result, children are born, and so you have a community, a population, and the whole pattern of family life, which is a universal global fact, and has been so ever since Christianity began.

[14 : 13] Indeed, since, in many cases, since before Christianity began. All right, well, this is God being serious about his purpose for the development and continuation of the human race.

And we are serious if we take God's purpose seriously. And when this split in the diocese and in other dioceses, two, following what had happened here in New Westminster, when this had taken place, well, the issue came out into the open and we had to say, and we did say right from the beginning, and this, I specify this because this was a bit that really hurt, you know, we, who had declined to continue with the Synod and the churches we represented, we declined also to continue with paying our diocesan dues on the ground which we, being serious Christians, as we thought to be, the ground we could not escape, namely, that you cannot glorify

God by subsidizing sin, and I won't say any more about that but I think you can see the thrust of that phrase, well, all right, and so we went on, well, now, we looked around, and Anik, north of the border, here in Canada, and Akna, south of the border, we recognized that our people, including the evangelical people, that is, the people who said they were evangelicals when asked what sort of Anglicans they were, we all said that we were, in fact, Anglicans seeking to be scriptural, seeking to be historic, that is, loyal to the heritage, liturgical in the

Anglican sense, that is, faithful to the prayer book, we were, in other words, what the world calls the conservatives, facing something which was a deviation, all right.

one of the things that was started almost at once, after this division had become clear, was the production of a series of what you could only call tracts, I hope that that word doesn't carry too many negative overtones for you, tracts, small books, booklets, you might call them, dealing in a basic way with the basic truths out of which basic Christianity, Christianity that took itself seriously, was constructed, always had been constructed, and as far as we were concerned, was going to go on being constructed in the future, whatever the liberal deviationists might say or do.

[18 : 13] So, there was very soon a list of some twenty such booklets on basic Christian things.

Then the idea arose could we turn at least the key items in that list of tracts into a book?

And there was a publisher very ready to do that, and to cut the long story short, that was where the book for taking God seriously came from.

Yes, I am the nominal author, but a lot of the material came from people who were seeking, as best they could, to put together an understanding of spiritual realities that had been called in question by this split.

And so our book here at St. John's for this session, First Sunday in Lent, is nominally a Packer book, and I don't mind you thinking of it that way, why should I?

[19 : 41] it is an attempt to speak representatively for the folk who north and south of the border have said we cannot in conscience deviate the way that these folk are asking us to do.

And you've, well, you've had the book recommended to you, and you see now what its title means.

The book is trying to take God seriously in his revelation. And that, of course, is a standard Christian thing to do, and that's what Christians have been seeking to do ever since Christianity began.

Whatever liberal theologians and other modern deviationists may say, there is no split that we can recognize, no split that's there to be recognized between our historic faith in Jesus as it's been passed down in the fellowship, and the truth about Jesus as it's expressed in Holy Scripture.

Each supports the other. together. And it's to maintain that togetherness that the action I've described has been taken, and the book that we're working with has been written.

[21 : 21] And if no, you ask, well, all right, Packer, what were you trying to do in terms of the subject matter, as you wrote this book?

And the answer is, first of all, I was trying to make clear the basic things in basic Christianity.

If I were rewriting it, I would probably insert, well, I would certainly insert one or maybe two chapters on God himself.

One of them would certainly be on the Trinity, that God is three persons who were as truly one God as they are three persons, and who always act together.

You never have Father or Son or Spirit operating without the other two, even if, in particular passages, and all the way through the Old Testament, the plurality of this unity is not highlighted.

[22 : 40] And then the second, but the truth of the Trinity, it's basic to everything that's said about God's saving work, and so it's a truth that Christians must regard, as fundamental to their own faith.

Then the second thing I would write about is the notion of God as the embodiment of all truth, goodness, and, shall I say, positive standards, as distinct from being the name, the name, for any sort of sense of shivers down the spine that you may feel as you look at sunsets over the water here in Vancouver, or as you confront anything else in the created order that really does strike awe and amazement and joy into your soul.

People who are not Christians do have that experience, they have it at a very deep level, some of them, and a great deal of the poetry and prose of this last few hundred years is dealing with that sense of God, which is sometimes expressed biblically, and more often is not, because the standards aren't there.

Well, that would be my second chapter on God, you see, expressing the standards, which God reveals as belonging to himself, the himself who is themselves, the himself who is themselves, who revealed himself, stroke themselves in the Bible.

And, well, I think that the book is deficient, really, because it doesn't give a couple of chapters to expounding the truth about God in that way.

[25 : 03] Pause. You've heard me speak so far, and I hope that it's all hung together. This is a point at which I want to say, are you with me?

Yes. Have you any queries now about things that I've been saying? Yeah, John? come the diocese disagreed with your attitude so much?

Because it sounds fine to me. I can't answer that question properly without answering it at length.

And if I tried to answer it at length, well, it would mess up the rest of the talk because there wouldn't be time to give it.

So, if you don't mind, John, I will simply say, well, all the dioceses, without exception, started on what I called, and will call again, a conservative base.

[26 : 11] that is, they started as expressions of communal loyalty to Bible standards, Bible truth, Bible faith, Bible gospel.

And, well, one of the things that those of us who have found themselves obliged to split off from mainstream dioceses are trying to do is to persuade those mainstream dioceses to return into the way of righteousness, which at present they're not doing, and one doesn't know what the future will be.

But that's where we are. And if you think that what I'm saying sounds fine, well, you are very kind. Thank you, John, and now let's get on.

in this book, this book which is short of the two chapters on God, but otherwise I think covers the waterfront of basic biblical Christianity fairly well and fairly clearly, I hope, it was for clarity more than anything else that I wrote and shaped the chapters the way I did.

This material is intended to give a sort of bird's eye view of the number of, well, no, I won't say it that way, rather of the variety of material material, which makes up historic Christianity and without which historic Christianity is a bit of a ruin.

[28 : 13] It may not be such a ruin as to fall completely apart, but it's enough of a ruin not to have a gospel with a sharp point that's capable of saving souls.

Well, what are the realities that must be there in order to achieve that kind of forcefulness for the gospel, the one true gospel which we're trying to maintain.

I'm going to suggest to you that there are six items. I'm not able to expound all six of them, but I hope that what I say will indicate what has to be there.

Otherwise, there's a hole, a hole where there ought to be building, a hole where there ought to be solidity, in bricks and mortar terms, where there ought to be walls and limits set and areas marked off.

in other words, areas where truth and falsehood are realities, and the truth is identified from scripture and kept together as a hole and not allowed to be diminished through the development of holes, spelt the other way, H-O-L-E-S, that is gaps, gaps in truths, which, according to the Bible, ought to be there or you can't see the whole picture.

[30 : 07] What are these items? Well, I'll take them in order. I'm using my time, oh, I've got a little more time in hand than I thought I had.

I was going to say I'm using my time, I think, prodigally, but no, we're more or less as I planned it, so I shan't need to leave out any of what I've planned to say about these six realities, which need to be there, and each of which has a chapter to itself in this book, Taking God Seriously.

First of all, there is the Bible itself, and I am one of those, I make no apology for it, who holds to the doctrine that the Bible is truly the Word of God in every sense of that phrase.

It is what God has said, and every time we read Scripture or hear Scripture read, the thought should be in our mind, this came ultimately from God, using, maybe, sources that were already present in the world, but given the divine stamp, because of what he prompted the human writers to do with them.

The Bible is as truly human writing as it is divine writing, but it's as truly divine writing as it is human writing, and we need to remember that always.

[32 : 00] and to learn to live as our spiritual ancestors were always labouring to learn to live according to the Scriptures.

Much more could be said about that, and maybe, we'll see how the time works out, maybe some of it can be said today. I will only say one thing more under this heading, and that is, so we should understand that whenever we see any part of the Bible in print, or whenever we hear any part of the Bible read, well, God is actually speaking in and through what's been written and what's being said.

God's word of God here and now, just as much as it was the word of God when God prompted its human writer first to put it together.

And if one's understanding of Scripture doesn't embrace both those emphases, well, again, there's a hole in it, and a bit of wreckage at a point where solid building is called for, and indeed where the rest of the structure is being undermined by the absence of this particular bit of building which is falling apart.

I would like to say more, and you probably are aware that I've written a good deal more about Scripture and its authority, its nature, and its emphasis, and its dominant relation, the relation that is that it should have to the Church and all the Church's members, but I can't say more about it now, we can come back to it.

[34 : 18] However, for the Bible to be all that God means it to be, yes, it must be there in its fullness. And then second, doctrine must be there.

What do you mean by doctrine, you ask? Well, doctrine actually is a Latin word, doctrina, and it means truth for teaching.

The teaching context is always part of the word's meaning. It isn't just private belief, it's belief which one seeks to share because one believes that it's true.

doctrine, and the Church has a history of doctrine, and at the center of that history are affirmations about God and human sin and salvation by grace, which they come directly out of Scripture, Scripture, and Scripture itself tells us that these things are not negotiable, these things are fundamental to reality.

Doctrine is a declaration of reality when it presents truths about God, as it does, and the truths are presented for belief and obedience.

[35 : 56] A lot of people still, I think, as in my youth, have Bibles on their shelves which they never open.

And that's bad news. If your Bible is never opened, you never get to the doctrine, and if you never get to the doctrine, you are not in a position to get to a solid faith yourself, as an individual Christian and servant of God.

Doctrine, therefore, is Bible, truth, set up for teaching. And all healthy forms of Christian faith, right from the start, have been clear, strong, and full in doctrine.

Christianity, from the very start, has been proclaimed as a doctrine. This is a body of integrated truth. It all hangs together.

And this is what we're seeking to persuade everybody that we should be embracing and living by. God's OK, so I have one chapter on the Bible, what it is, and one chapter on doctrine, teaching, and what the teaching is for.

[37 : 32] And then I go on to say, third reality, what must be maintained when you talk about the Bible, what must be regarded as integral to biblical doctrine.

It's like a tapestry, woven, and this is one strand in the tapestry, distinct from just saying truth, sorry, just saying the Bible is given, the doctrine is given, a helper is given.

This is something which many who call themselves Christians don't say enough about, namely the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who at the prompting of the Father and the Son gave the Bible in the first instance, and who now, in the mind and in the heart of Bible readers who are open to this, interprets the Bible, that is, shows the reader how all this applies to them, again, you haven't said enough until you talk about the helper as the third reality given by God so that you may take him seriously, and that is, as I said, the reality of the Holy Spirit giving understanding of what it's all about, giving expression to its expositors, its teachers, and all those who seek to put Bible teaching together and apply it,

God gives the Spirit to those who are willing to receive the Spirit and to ask that the God who gave Scripture will, through the Spirit, show them its meaning and teach them, in due course, to pass on that application to those to whom they witness.

well, as I said, that seems to me to be integral to the building that God is putting together by all that he has done to lead us to take him seriously.

[40 : 19] Again, I would like to say far more about it than I'm able to say here. Here, I have to stop short at just saying, now, when I talk about taking God seriously, I'm referring to taking the Bible seriously, taking the Church's historic doctrine based on the Bible seriously, and taking the Divine Helper, the Holy Spirit, the Interpreter, seriously, and opening oneself to his ministry.

history, and again, I'd like to spend time talking about that, but for the moment, we must move on. Let me only say at this point, then, that if there isn't a positive stress on the Holy Spirit as the enlightener of those who otherwise wouldn't be able to see what the Bible means, and that's where the truth of sin comes in, well, one wouldn't have the whole story, God wouldn't be serious about taking himself seriously if he stopped short at that point.

Then, fourth, reality, which runs all the way through the Bible, as a line of thought, and, shall I say it, a concept, which grows and develops as the Bible story unfolds, God has given the truth of the kingdom and set himself in the course of what's in Scripture to teach us that the world, the created order of things, is both the kingdom of God, for thine is the kingdom, with the power and the glory, it's the kingdom of God right from the word go and in every respect, in other words, there's nothing that happens in this cosmos apart from divine control, and the at the same time, the kingdom is a goal, an unrealized goal, for which the Lord

Jesus has become the mediator and the focus, the not such, well, from one standpoint, the challenger and the donor, both, and you've got both those lines of thought about the kingdom, parallel in Scripture, this is God's kingdom, and it isn't, because Satan at the moment controls so much, and God through Christ is going to end that someday, but already the world is the kingdom, because God is overruling what Satan gets up to, and there's no question who is finally in charge, if Satan thinks he's finally in charge, he's fooling himself, well, the thought, the thought has been around, but it isn't a

Christian thought, it isn't a true thought, and it isn't a thought that ought to bother us. Okay, then, what have we got? There must be focus on the Bible, on doctrine, on the divine helper who gives us, enables us to understand the Bible and the doctrine and apply it, there has to be, well, there has to be, there is, in fact, the kingdom in both these senses, God actually dominant, and God seeking that his will be done in every part of the disordered cosmos in which at present it isn't being done.

[45 : 04] And that leads us to a fourth reality, which is there in scripture, there in historic Christianity, there in the prayer book, but not always there in our hearts, and that is the reality of repentance, of which the basic dimension is that our lives are given, I mean, we give them, to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, quite precisely, we give them to the Son, through Christ, we give them to the Father, and the Holy Spirit enables us in doing that, so that repentance involves the whole Trinity, and repentance means turning from self, which will always point us more or less in the wrong direction, to God, to his word, to his revealed will, to his purpose, and accepting that there's a contrast there, and that you cannot please

God by pleasing yourself, and I don't think I need expound the doctrine of repentance further than that, we hear a good deal about repentance here at St.

John's, and it's a healthy thing for us that we do, but I make a point of it because while there's never been a time in history when Christianity hasn't been referred to as the faith, there never yet has been a time in history when Christianity has been referred to as the repentance.

Rather, the theme of repentance has been sidelined sidelined because, I think it was G.K. Chesterton who said, it isn't that Christianity has been tried and found wanting, it's that Christianity has been inspected, found difficulty, sorry, found difficult, and not tried at all, which is a way of saying, that on the way to repentance people stop, think about what repentance is going to involve in terms of a change of life, and then backpedal.

And the world, I think, and I believe God thinks, because of the things scripture says, the world today is very much in a backpedaling mode, in terms of its attitude to Christianity.

[48 : 16] As an idea, yes, Christianity has lots of interest and lots of potential, but as a program, Christianity means repentance, change of life at just about every point, simply because we, by nature, from birth on, without thinking, because this is so natural to us, we are self-centered.

And we are seeking to exploit everything in the created order, in the interests of our own gratification and pleasure.

Well, that's the story about repentance, as it seems to me, according to the scriptures.

And I put it in my notes, in terms of God giving us a mirror for use in seeing ourselves and seeing where we need to change, which is what mirrors are regularly used for, as we all of us know.

You look in the mirror to see what in your appearance needs to be changed. And so mother says to son or daughter, look in the mirror and do your hair.

[49 : 51] or, well, there are a number of things that will be said that begin with, look in the mirror and make a change.

Yes, and see, the mirror is the first meaning of a great deal that we're taught in scripture about human nature.

Human nature is twisted out of shape. human nature needs a fundamental change. You will understand the change if you learn to be a disciple of Christ rather than a self-server and a self-pleaser.

And that's something that you must do or else, once again, you're in the position of a person living in a building that's wrecked.

A building where things that ought to be basic to the stability of the whole have simply gone to seed, gone to pot, fallen in, or whatever one's going to say, in pursuing the wrecked house picture.

[51 : 09] there. And that means that the parts, the rest of the house, the parts of the house that haven't suffered yet are going to suffer soon.

Okay, God gives us a mirror, and the mirror is for use. And if we don't learn to say Christianity is as truly the repentance as it is the faith, well, however good our intentions, our purpose of strengthening the fellowship, the church, the witness, the faith on earth, that purpose is going to be thwarted because something integral to it is missing.

All right, well, say again, if God takes himself seriously, he is serious about this, whether we are or not.

And we've perhaps got to learn to be more serious about it, than we've been thus far. And then, finally, God has given us signs.

We know what signs are for. The roads these days, everywhere, are full of signs. The signs tell you which way to go, according to what you want.

[52 : 45] signs, they are signs, they are sign warnings, don't go this way, don't do that, or whatever.

But they're signs, and God has given us signs. And they are baptism and the Lord's Supper, the two rites, the two routines of devotion that we call sacraments.

How am I doing for time? Well, just about scraping home. Okay, I won't say anything more than about the sacraments, although I try in the chapters in this book to say clearly, I hope, the basic things that need to be said about baptism and the supper.

I hope so, I tried. I am going to round it all off now, all that I've been saying by just summarizing like this.

God, who takes himself seriously, is calling on us to take ourselves just as seriously and to focus on the things that he says you must take seriously if you're going to live in tune with me, and the things relating to your relationship with me which you cannot get right unless you're prepared to take yourself seriously in this way.

[54 : 38] And the six things that you've got to take seriously are the Bible and its authority, doctrine, and its shape, shall I say, its elements, its ingredients, the ministry of the helper, the Holy Spirit, guiding us into an understanding of Scripture and how it applies, a mirror which tells us that Scripture is to be applied in order to reorder disordered lives, which all of us start with, and the kingdom, which is always to be the goal as we seek to live and act for the glory of God.

And the kingdom, when I say the kingdom, remember, there are the two levels, the sovereignty of God, whose will is always done, that's his will of events, will, and the conflict between God and the forces of evil, the conflict that keeps the will of God in terms of command, this is a different sense of the word will, but that keeps God's word of command from being done, that's evil, that has to be challenged, that has to be overcome, and that's the other dimension of the kingdom for which we must always be working.

And then, final item in the series, the signs telling you which way to go and which way not to go. And you can get Packer's understanding of a lead in all these matters in this book.

And having said that, I would just like to say, and now I move to a bit of anecdotage.

It has been put to me that people like Packer's anecdotage and they want more of it. will, I'm not sure that I resonate entirely with that.

[57 : 27] But anyway, here is a bit of Packer's anecdotage. I wonder if you know the name of Elizabeth Elliott.

Those of us who are older will know it for sure. If she were alive today, she'd be my age. And early in life, her husband was martyred by a tribe, which they were trying to evangelize, martyred in a way which made a great impact on the Christian world, but which left Elizabeth high and dry, of course, with one child.

I was privileged to know Elizabeth. She was a very remarkable lady with very deep wisdom and very deep humility and very strong faith.

Well, she had a favourite hymn. And I'm finishing this way because it is my, well, one of my favourite hymns also.

It's a 19th century composition, and for some reason, which I've never been able to understand, a lot of our hymn books leave it out. I think it's precious, and I would like to finish this talk by reciting it to you.

[58 : 59] Some of you will know it for sure, and some of you won't know it for sure. Well, I think that the sentiment, which goes back, as you will realise, to Psalm 23, its sentiment is precious, and I, for one, like to use it devotionally, and perhaps when you've heard it, you will feel the same.

And if you allow yourself to use it devotionally, well, you will end up, I think, taking God seriously, in the manner that I've tried to describe in this last hour.

Well, no, I'm overrunning, so here I go quickly. In heavenly love abiding, no change, my heart will fear.

For safe is such confiding, and nothing changes here. A storm may roar without me, my heart may low be laid, but God is round about me, so can I be dismayed?

Implication, of course, is no. Wherever he will guide me, no want shall turn me back. My shepherd is beside me, and nothing can I lack.

[60 : 36] His wisdom ever waketh, his sight is never dim. He knows the way he taketh, and I will walk with him.

Green pastures are before me, which yet I have not seen. Bright skies will soon be on me where the dark clouds have been.

My hope I cannot measure. My path to life is free. My savior has my treasure, and he will walk with me.

I think that's beautiful. I think that's moving, and I think that's the real thing when a Christian grasps that God is taking himself seriously in his approach to, well, to you and to me.

And this is how seriously we must take our response to God. And there, brothers and sisters, I'd like to leave you.

[61 : 57] You've heard me explain what lay behind this book. If you've got questions about the contents of the book, well, the first thing to do in this question time, we've got a quarter of an hour, is to produce them.

Let me speak to them. And, well, anything else which you would like to say, please say on. John, wait a minute, you have it.

Yes. Speaking of same-sex unions among pirates, mate litage, as they called it, was a frequent occurrence in a centuries-old tradition.

So when you say that the diocese, in a sense, pirated their ethic... Well, we, in these 21st century days, we are wonderful at our capacity for, how shall I say it, for instating the eccentricity, glorifying the minority, highlighting the odd, and requiring the standard to take the back seat, while the particular concerns and hurts of those who are not standard are attended to.

I'm not saying that there is no reason for that attitude in its positive thrust, thrust, but I am saying that in its negative thrust, it's an attitude which takes us straight away off the track, because that which ought to be our prime concern immediately becomes a secondary interest, and that which, at best, has the status of a secondary concern, becomes primary.

[64 : 17] century. That's all I'm prepared to say about it. I'm not saying you're wrong, you're not wrong, but I am saying that our vision of such things, I believe, is systematically distorted, and that's one of the things that the history books of the 22nd century, if the world lasts that long, will be saying loud and clear about the 21st century.

I'm just going to order the questions, because I noticed there's a plethora. We've got Colleen, and then Sheila, and then Dan, and then Sam. Okay. You take charge from now on.

Dr. Packer, thank you so much for this book, which I was at Bill Reimer's special yesterday at Regent College, and Harvey came up to me and said, so, Dr.

Packer's talking about the book tomorrow. And I then panicked, because I thought I had another week, but I ran home and read the last 20 pages, and so it was fresh in my head this morning at the 7.30 service, and I don't think I've ever experienced Eucharist like that because of you.

So I thank you, Sheila. It was, it's absolutely extraordinary to have read about repentance, about the mirror, and then have read about the importance of baptism, and then read about the importance of the Lord's Supper, and then the next morning we're going through it.

[65 : 51] Oh, okay. You know, I never thought it really just went through the motions, but I think there was a bit of that going on. And so, thank you for this.

It's just so practical. This book is so practical. Thank you very, very much for it. Because it takes complex theological concepts and gives us application, gives us the ability to apply it in our walk.

So thank you very, very much. Thank you for this, Dr. Packer, and I just want a comment about the same sex union stuff, because I really would like to see this put to rest.

It was the battlefield. It was not the war. The war was about the authenticity of scripture related to how God wants us to live. And you have made that nice and clear for us.

And I think the diocese had kind of forgotten what the word of God was about. And it just is a shame that there was so much focus by the press and others on this one issue, when really the issue was much bigger than that.

[67 : 06] Thanks. Thank you, yes. Okay, and Dan, or did you? No. Dan? Dr. Patrick, you had mentioned in Taking the Bible Seriously and Authority that you have written other things on this.

Could you share with us what you would recommend from what you've written on that subject of Taking the Bible and Authority Seriously? Books or articles that you've written? Well, I'll accept the question, though not with the implication that reading Packer is the best stuff to read.

I'm not going to imply that. I want you to hear me say that I'm not going to imply that. But, yes, I wrote, as long ago as 1958, a book called Fundamentalism of the Word of God, in which I tried to clarify tangled wires in a good deal of this area.

And then I wrote a book titled God Has Spoken, which attempted to put in positive terms what in Fundamentalism of the Word of God I put in controversial terms.

And those are the books, the main books, anyway. I've also written many articles, but I can't give you an index to the articles off the top of my head.

[68 : 46] But everything that I want to say is said more or less, sometimes less, but certainly said in those books.

books. So, though they're elderly, and though the modern fashion is not to read books that are more than 20 years old, you asked for a recommendation, and I recommend to you those first two books of mine on scripture.

Great, thank you. all right. Dr. Packer, I'm eager to applaud you on how you dealt right off the beginning with the word faith, and what a mangled word that is today.

And you've got a little subtitle here. What is faith? A word that slips and slides. And then you go on to explain what faith is, and it's certainly not any kind of a feeling.

I think you would, I hope, agree that it's an action. And just in a little bit of a reference to what John was asking about what went wrong at that season where people walked out, I'm reminded of what C.S.

[70 : 02] Lewis said in the first of the Screwtape letters, and through the mouth of Screwtape, he says, your man has been accustomed ever since he was a boy to have a dozen incompatible philosophies dancing about together inside his head.

He doesn't think of doctrines as primarily true or false, but as academic or practical, outworn or contemporary, conventional or ruthless. Jargon, not argument, is your best ally in keeping him from the church.

And it seems to me that, I think if you put it in philosophical terms, the law of non-contradiction would be kind of what faith is. You grab onto something and you go with it until a better answer presents itself.

But faith, I would say, is holding onto it. And Lewis actually deals with it as well. He's got a chapter in faith in Mere Christianity and he talks about it's training yourself how to hold onto a truth in spite of the feelings and emotions that come along.

And for the guys that, it seems to me, for liberals, it's just their willingness or their unwillingness to hang on to truth and their willingness to hang on to a whole bunch of incompatible philosophies at the same time.

[71 : 22] So thank you for your fresh words on faith that were needed, I think. Well, thank you for that comment. Yes?

A priest from the diocese said, I picked up Dr. Packer's book, Knowing God, I put it down halfway through, Dr. Packer doesn't like anything liberal. And some people, like it's St.

David of Wales, oh, bishoping, it must be okay, he's allowed as a bishop. And an English fellow, a bit younger than you, he spotted me and he started talking away and it never stopped, the lights were turning out, I heard his wife's voice.

His theology was exactly like yours in St. David of Wales, it was hanging in there, now it's completely closed. It's a really nice, old, old, beautiful building, like whoa, yeah, it's closed, no, nothing's left there.

Yeah? Thank you, John, it's beyond me to comment on that, no comment is needed. And that brings us to the end, I'm sorry, maybe you can speak to me, it's 1020 and we probably really should wrap up, so I'm just going to take this moment to thank Dr.

[72 : 30] Packer so much for being here and sharing. Until our next fireside chat.

Thank you, Alexandra, yes, okay, here we go.