

# Q and A for December

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 02 December 2012

[ 0 : 00 ] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfreda, Georgia. During this time, Pastor Gardner answers various questions.

Alright, I'm going to start by giving you tonight, that's a Spanish message, y'all want me to preach that one? I want to go over the spiritual inventory with you.

They're supposed to have me some slides ready back there. Patrick, I don't know if you know where they are, but we're going to go over the spiritual inventory. Last Sunday morning, I gave out a little questionnaire, and I asked you some questions, and I would just like to go over what you said and some decisions it makes me make.

The first question I asked was, how many of you read the Bible? Now, there were 88 people in this room that would be teenagers and above. There were 88 people in the room and only 68 filled them out.

So 20 of them were either exempt from the quiz or embarrassed about the quiz. You never know which one they were. But here's what they said. 7% do not read the Bible at all.

[ 1 : 14 ] They didn't write down, they wrote down, they did not read the Bible. 29% read the Bible once a week. 28% read the Bible about three times a week. 10% read it five.

And 25% of our church reads the Bible. Or 25% of those 68 read it every day. And I was very excited about that. But I just want to, and I'll go over a couple things at the end of this.

But I want you, you know, Bible is everything in a church like our church. It's everything. It's what we teach. It's what we believe. It's our handbook. It's our only rule of faith and practice, everything that we do.

And so I'm very glad that people were honest about it. But that's also one of the reasons I will do more and more Bible reading in our services. The Apostle Paul told Timothy, the Apostle Paul told Timothy when he wrote to me, he said, give attention to reading.

And what he wasn't talking about, get a copy of Reader's Digest. And he wasn't talking about read a commentary. He was talking about read the book. He was talking about what he would do in public. And we want to know the Bible. And so if you're not reading your Bible and you would like to learn how to read your Bible, there are people here, and I'll explain that to you in a second, but there are people here that can help you learn how to read the Bible and to go through your Bible.

[ 2 : 34 ] And, you know, you do not have to be. I think one of the things that scares people is how big the Bible is and how hard it is to understand some of it. And then I think it's because they think that if they're a Bible reader, they need to read the Bible an hour a day to be a Bible reader.

You know what? If I were you and I could start with five minutes, I'd start with five minutes. I'd start where I could start and I'd read. And if you haven't read the Bible all the way through, I'd start with the book of Matthew and read through the whole New Testament.

Read just a few minutes every day and you will be shocked how fast you can read through the entire Bible. Just read to a certain point and stop and then continue reading the next time you read. Read and read the Bible, read the whole Bible.

We ought to read the entire Bible. That ought to be important to us. The next one is church attendance. And church attendance, 26.5% of the people that were here that morning filled out the card.

Come 26.5% come once a week. That's it. They're usually there, our Sunday morning people. So 52% of our people come only on Sundays.

[ 3 : 35 ] The average coming only on Sundays. And 47% come to all of the services. And I never make an issue of this to try to, I don't want to guilt you or blame you or push you into doing things.

You ought to do it because the Lord births it in your heart and it's what you want. Let me explain something to you. Birds of a feather flock together.

You, you know, you look around. Who can I hang around that's like me? Boy, I challenge you to be in every church service you can be in. I challenge you to be in every activity you can be in. I mean, that we are family.

And church attendance is, church attendance is the time you learn the Bible here. It's also the time you meet your friends. I love the way you are. I love the way you are. I love the fact that most of the time I leave before you leave because you won't quit talking.

But, you know, help people get that. People are going to leave the world and come to follow Jesus are going to need to find friends. They're going to need to find friends. They're going to need to find people that have the same interests and love Jesus.

[ 4 : 39 ] And that's one of the great things about church. Giving. 9% give nothing. 25%, nearly 10% of our people give nothing. 26.5% give something, but they don't tithe.

36.8% tithe and 28% give more than a tithe. And I think that is, I mean, that's exceptional. To be honest with you, it's very good giving, but we certainly can improve.

And if you're not giving, I hope you'll learn to give. I was talking to the Spanish people. I was talking to the Spanish people at Trinity Hill and they had come from here at this church in Trinity Hill and from the church in Dawsonville.

And they were all, there were men of 30 something men there together. And, uh, the, every question I told them, you know what, you know, guess what a Christian's life is giving love.

When you love your wife, how do you have a good marriage? It comes down to one word. People that are lost take people that are saved. Give how did friendship lost people take say people give everything about us is that we're a giver.

[ 5 : 45 ] And so giving ought to become a regular part, uh, two more things. And then I'll give you some goals and then we'll move to questions. I asked, are you a hundred percent sure you'd go to heaven or on, on, are you sure that you're saved?

And 91% said they are sure of the 68 that filled it out. Uh, six said they are not sure. Uh, and then one person put on there, if what you say is true, then I'm sure.

So seven aren't sure, because how do you know you can trust me? I don't know if I can trust me. Fact is, I do know I can't trust me. And, uh, so I, uh, uh, uh, uh, uh, I, uh, I can ask you, man, I wish you feel the, I feel the burden that people would hear the gospel and get saved.

I wish you would take very seriously the invitation time. I wish you would say, I am going to pray and beg God to save people. Uh, I know that you could easily question in your mind.

Why is he always ask us if we're saved? No one raised their hand. Well, no one raised their hand, but seven people said on a sheet of paper anonymously, no, I'm not saved or I'm not sure I'm saved.

[ 6 : 56 ] And I want to make sure they are. There is absolutely nothing so important as that. The next one I said, are you struggling with sin? Uh, and 60% of our people said they were struggling and 40% said they were not struggling.

And, um, I put, I was struggling. Uh, and so that was kind of a trap question. I love the way you answered that. I just tell all of you, I love the way you answered that. Those of you put, yes. A lot of you were wanting to make sure I knew you weren't into some deep, dark pornographic sin.

So you put self, uh, you just wrote, you put yes. And then you wrote the word self. Uh, uh, uh, somebody else put something like not totally what I ought to be. I mean, you want to make sure that I knew that it wasn't anything.

I didn't get your name, but it was funny. But I'll tell you, I put down, I'm struggling with sin. I thought, you know, uh, and it's a perfectly normal. I think of, you know, the ones that said, no, I know you didn't mean it in a proud way.

It was perfectly normal for you to realize I'm not ever, I'm not where I ought to be. I'm not all I ought to be. I want to grow. Uh, uh, I still have some pride issues. I have this or that. I think every one of us ought to be striving towards being all Jesus wants us to be.

[ 8 : 04 ] And so, uh, that was, uh, that was a, uh, kind of a trap question. I just want to see how you'd answered and you answered it about like I had hoped you would. Let me give you four goals real quickly that I have from the thing that, uh, that'll be very clear.

Number one, and I don't know how to express this enough to you, but I want you to get involved in foundations. How's that? I'm very rarely just said flat out.

I am asking you, begging you, pushing you, pleading with you, but I wish you would get involved in foundations. I wish everybody in this room would get involved in foundations.

If you have not been through foundations, then you ought to go through foundations enough that you know how, uh, foundations, uh, how to teach it. If nothing else, if you already are a mature Christian, still let somebody go through it with you, go through it quickly.

I'll go through it with you quickly and just show you how I want you to teach it. If they, if you'd like that. But everybody in this church needs to know Jesus and they need to know why they know Jesus and they don't need to toe the party line.

[ 9 : 09 ] They need to be able to read from the Bible what's going on. And if you, you know, you're the Sunday night crowd, man, you're the cream of the crop. You're the greatest people of the church here. I thank God for you. But you know what you're going to, you have the opportunity to share your life with somebody else and help them learn to grow in Jesus.

You have the opportunity to sit down with the most exciting thing in the world. You have the exact exact opportunity I had as a missionary when I would sit down and I literally started out with guys.

And I would say, now this book is divided into 66 books and these big, big bowl numbers. Those are chapters. These little ones are verses. They didn't know that. And here in America, you might be shocked what people don't know and how they're going to learn.

Listen quickly, please. The majority of real growing as a Christian will not happen from what I saved in the pulpit. Though I study as hard as I can and I pray as much as I can. Not as much.

I see that's, I need to struggle with that. See, that's a lie. I could study more and I could pray more. But, I mean, I do work at it. But they're not going to learn near as much as they could if they could sit with you and look you in the eyeball and say, I don't get that.

[ 10 : 16 ] I don't understand that. I need more than just that verse right there. Help me. Teach me. Show me. Talk to me. And so Foundations was meant for, it's something I've been doing in my ministry for 30 years or more.

I didn't learn about it in the early part of my ministry. But it is the most fantastic thing you could possibly get involved in. You develop a friendship because you meet at, you can meet at Starbucks or for some of you that's like a religious holy site.

And you are members of that place. They know you by name. And when you walk in, they already start writing your name on a cup. Right, Peyton? Yeah. Right, John?

Some of you, I mean, you know, you're, and you could be a waffle house. You could do it at waffle house. You could do it at your, you could do it at your home or at their home. You could use the church.

But, but, you know, you could do it with a family, one family with another family, uh, uh, uh, any way possible. But share what the Bible says and teach people. Teach them where they'd have a chance to ask questions.

[ 11 : 21 ] And, and we start on the simplest stuff. How do you know you're saved? Uh, what does it mean to be a sinner? Where does the Bible say I'm a sinner? Uh, because people need to know the truth and it's easy to set through a 20 minute message that I preach, a 30 minute message that I preach, a 45 minute message that I preach and not really pay attention.

How are 7%, 7 people, how are 9% of our people not sure their salvation when I hammer it every service? Can I tell you that I don't blame them?

Well, the Holy Spirit's got to do the work, but he would do it through you. And, and, and yes, it's a sacrificial thing to be involved in, in, in foundations. It's sacrificial. It'll mean giving up a couple hours of your life.

It'll mean, um, not hanging with your regular people that you might hang with or just sitting at your house and watching TV. You might have to, you might have to record the TV program so you could watch it later.

But at the same time, it is one of the most rewarding things you could possibly ever do to, to watch the lights come on. Betty can tell you, I had a man in our house right here in coming.

[ 12 : 30 ] Uh, I had a man in our house and I was, he would, he always wanted to come to my house and he would come. And, uh, he's the funniest guy in the world. He's a basic, almost my age.

And I would say, he'd say, he'd ask me a question. I'd say, well, it's right here in the Bible. And he would say, can I read it? Let me be the one who reads it. I'd say, of course you can read it. And he'd put his finger on it and he'd read it slowly and come down and he'd go, wow.

Now let me make sure. Is that saying what I think that's saying? I said, that's saying what you think it's. He goes, whew, that's pretty good. So can I read that one more time before we go on? And I said, yeah, you just enjoy reading it.

Go ahead, read it again. I mean, it was like, I mean, it was wonderful. I mean, watching people grow, watching people learn. And, uh, it's, it's a, it's a fantastic thing, uh, to be an apostle.

They accompanied with those same guys from the baptism of John on. They hung around together. They were together. And so could I just say to you that, man, I, could I beg you to get with John Pearson and say, I really want to help with that.

[ 13 : 35 ] Uh, I'm not asking you to go cold Turkey, uh, knocking on doors and trying to talk people in to get saved. I'm not asking you to put on a trifold and go stand at the street corner and turn or burn, uh, heat or bleed.

I'm not asking you to do that. Uh, but, but could you share your life with somebody else and say, let me teach you about Jesus. And the goal would be, the goal would be second Timothy chapter two, Patrick, it's you.

So I know you can hit it. Second Timothy two, two, the goal would be that what you hear preached here at our church, that what you hear of me, Paul is talking there. But in this church of me, as long as I'm preaching truth among many witnesses, that be you the same commit thou to faithful men.

So I find a guy and I teach him and look who I teach a faithful man who shall be able to teach others also. So Paul said, Timothy, I taught you. You've heard me teach now, Timothy, go find a guy that you can teach, but make sure he's the guy that can teach another guy.

And if you want to see the gospel run around the world, if you want to see the gospel go forward, discipleship is the key to doing that. And so foundations is like, it's like foundations.

[ 14 : 42 ] It's like foundational. It's like the base. It's like the most important thing. It's like a, it's like the, it's like the underground, uh, uh, support system for the entire building. And so, uh, some, uh, some, uh, mom could, uh, uh, talk to another, get with another mom.

Uh, uh, some single lady could talk to another single lady. Some, you know, and we, we don't ever have men disciple women, men, disciple men and women, disciple women. And a couple can disciple a couple because, uh, you, you, you don't need to be talking to one woman.

That's when you're married to, but boy, I would like to ask you to get involved in discipleship. If I've been playing enough, I'm asking you, you can do ministry.

You say, well, I'm very busy. I have found that the busiest people are the most other people who can find the time the best. Somebody said to me, well, people can't meet with me.

I said, they sleep on, do they work 24 hours a day or are they ever asleep? You know, some of them would be willing to meet with you at four o'clock in the morning, maybe, or maybe they'd be willing to meet you at nine o'clock at night.

[ 15 : 48 ] But if we really care about souls and getting this book taught to them, if this Bible is that important, then I challenge you to get involved. And I wish you'd go see John tonight. And I think it holds your hand up, John, just in case somebody who's doing doesn't know you.

There's John. I'm asking you to go to see him. And I'm asking you to take somebody under your wing. Now, listen to this. If we're truly senders, and that's what we call ourselves, goers, senders, we have the missionaries that go, and almost none of them are here tonight.

The majority of them would be on the road. And you're church people. We have to model for them what the church is supposed to look like on the mission field. I mean, we ought to be where when they land on the field, they look and they say, I'm starting a Vision Baptist Church.

I'm going to clone this place. And they ought to be able to go to their field, and they ought to be able to stand up and say, well, you know, Ed leads music.

I'm looking for an Ed de los Reyes. I'm looking for a Stephen Evans that could lead to singing in my church. I'm looking for a Warren Frick that could teach a Sunday school class. I'm looking for a John Pearson that could do devotions.

[ 16 : 58 ] And I've been to the mission field, and I've had them tell me, this is my, and name the name of somebody in my church, this is my guy like that. And you share your life.

You ladies can make a difference. You men can make a difference. You young people can make a difference. Everybody can be discipling. You can disciple before church and after church. You're here anyway. You hang around anyway.

You could easily say, man, let's sit over in a corner. You could meet over there in that corner. You know what I mean? This building, got a lot of corners. It might not have rooms, but it's got corners. And you could get in a corner. And you could sit down, and you could talk.

I used to love walking into some of the churches in Peru, especially the Hunter Church where I first started. I'd walk in, and there'd be a person sitting over here, two or three people.

And they'd be, I knew exactly what it was. They'd be talking to them, and they'd have their Bible open. They'd be showing them stuff. And over here, somebody else doing the same thing. And sometimes a lost person would come to our church. Well, they came all the time.

[ 17 : 55 ] And you'd find somebody. They'd go sit with them and show them in the Bible. And before then, the service was over. They were already talking to them about Jesus. So you can go back to what I'm asking people to do there, if you would there, Patrick.

But I'm asking you to get involved in foundations that help people grow in grace. That's probably too much preaching on that. Probably ready to shoot me. Number two, that you would help others become more faithful to church to grow, learn, and serve.

I have found that people really don't grow in the Lord much who don't get around other Christians. And I can prove it.

Hebrews 10, 24. Look at Hebrews 10, 24 and 25 with me. And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.

Verse 25. Not forsaking the assembling together of ourselves as a matter of some is, but exhorting one another and so much the more as you see the day approaching. Now go back to verse 24.

[ 18 : 56 ] Now that you know the context is, they're talking about assembling. In verse 25, they're talking about assembling. Don't forsake the assembling of yourselves. Now, I want to ask you to listen to what I'm fixing to say to you.

The word church is a very confusing word because it has a lot of junk attached to it that's not biblical. Church never has anything to do with a building. Never.

In the Bible. In the Word of God, it's never about a building. Never about a building. In the Bible, if anything, if the closest word to a church would be a temple in the New Testament.

And the temple would be the temple of the Holy Spirit and that would be our bodies. So, when you come in and you go, man, it's got black walls and it don't look like a church. Well, who cares?

I mean, I'm all, you painted anything y'all want to paint. I don't care what you painted, but I'm just telling you the building is never the church. It's never, never, never the church. We could build the most beautiful. We could have that famous Sistine Chapel painter come and paint our roof and make it the most famous thing in the world.

[ 19 : 56 ] But that won't make a church. It'll make a building. Churches meet in buildings. Because the word church means assembly. The word church means get together.

That's what it means. In the Greek, the word for, you know, I speak another language. And whenever you translate things, if you're not careful, you kind of lose their meaning.

And we, you know, we've let that word change. We've let it mean, I hear sometimes when people say, church isn't when you get together.

It's when you go out and let the church be the church. Well, when you leave the church, it's no longer the church because it ain't assembled. You say, well, I didn't, I didn't assemble, but I was, I, I'm a part of the assembly, but I don't assemble.

Let me think that one through. Let me, let me run that through. I'm a part of the assembly, but I never assemble. No, you're not. You might, you might have your role on the part of the assembly, but you're, if you don't assemble, you ain't a part of the assembly.

[ 20 : 58 ] Can you understand that? If you do tell me, do you get it? Does it make sense? So it's a church. So watch this. Verse 24. Let us consider one another. How do you consider people? Well, the truth is several of you may have considered Tyler and Gretchen masters while they were in North Africa.

But the truth is there, there is a basic little saying that's true out of sight, out of mind. And you would, I'd never ask because I don't want you to lie in the church.

I wouldn't want you to lie in the church, you know, because this holy place might fall on your head. But, but, uh, uh, this holy warehouse, black walls might fall on your head. No, the truth is that when, when you're there overseas, we're like, yeah, yeah, I know them.

Yeah. I believe they go to our church whenever they come back. We don't really think about them much. But as we come in, we start looking around. I say, there, there, there's Bo. I know Bo. I know Ed. I know my, I know Miguel.

And, and I, and I, and I, and I look around and I know you and I can, and so that we consider and we think about each other. And we provoke unto love. Somebody else comes in and they say, uh, they say, John, you know, there's a family.

[ 22 : 10 ] It's a, one of our families is needing a little money. I didn't know if you wanted to help kick in to buy something. I was wanting us to love on them a little bit. And John says, man, I wasn't even thinking about that, but you're provoking me to love, buddy. That's exactly what's going on.

Hey, uh, Trent is right here walking around here saying, uh, I want to provoke y'all do a little loving. So he pulls out this thing. He's provoking us. I mean, he's, he's, uh, egging us on. He's pushing us.

He's provoking us to, to, to, to do that. Uh, I'm provoking you tonight. I've been provoking you to do foundations and I'm provoking you to get people to go to church. And I'll just tell you my personal experience.

And I've only been going to church for 58 years, almost 59. Got the womb time 60. I'm at 60 by now. Cause I went in the womb. And if you, I'll just tell you something.

When people slowly drift out of church, they slowly quit serving Jesus. Their Bible reading stops. Oh, they'll still be moral people. Maybe, but church boy, it's an important thing.

[ 23 : 09 ] And your new Testament was written to the church about the church for the church, church, church, church, church, church, church, church, church. That's all it's about. After you get past the book of, after you get past the book of John, you get into the book of Acts and go on.

It's the church. Boy, it's an important place. Next goal, Patrick. I think I'm need, I'm glad they put up these tomato walls. Cause I'm probably about to duck behind one. I would ask you pray in every service that people will be saved and decisions will be made and that the Holy Holy Spirit will work that I will preach clearly and powerfully.

You know, I realized that on the whole, there are a lot of people in here that really know their Bibles. Uh, the young people say that y'all are very intimidating church to preach to. Well, you're intimidating to me sometimes. Cause I look out there and I know that I'm not saying anything.

You don't already know that you haven't already heard a hundred times. I mean, pastor Frick sits over there and I know that pastor Frick, uh, could be my college professor still. I know that I know that John Pearson knows the Bible as well or better than I know it.

I know lots of you are like that, uh, but we're in here together to help build other people. You understanding me? We're to help build other people. And so when I'm preaching and there's some lost people here, and maybe you didn't think there were any lost people here, but six of them said, I'm not sure I'm saved.

[ 24 : 24 ] And another one said, if what you say is true and you may be here, maybe they were cutting up. Maybe they were, you don't know what was going on. And, but, but man, I, when I read that it broke my heart, I don't want them trusting me.

I don't trust in me. I don't trust in what I say. I want to know the Bible says it. I want the Holy Spirit to drive it into their heart. So when I give the invitation and you're sitting there going, Austin, speed it up, buddy.

We already know none of them are going to raise their hand. Everybody's already saved. Maybe they're not. Maybe they're not. Six of them said they certainly weren't sure.

And one more said, well, if what you say is true. And that the last question is, I hope that we would hunger for holiness. I hope we would hunger for holiness.

I hope you always struggle. I hope you always struggle. I hope it's always, man. I want to know Jesus. I want to know him better. I want to love him more. I want to grow in grace.

[ 25 : 23 ] I don't want the day to ever come. Man, don't relax. Paul said he had not apprehended. Paul said, I have not arrived. And you want me to tell you when you arrive? When you're dead. That's when you arrive.

I still study. Literally, I'm reading two books right now. I'm trying to learn how to preach. You say, well, good night, man. You've been preaching forever. I know, but I still got a lot to learn. I read.

I read theology books. I read biographies. I'm reading. I'm always reading because I don't think I've gotten there yet. And I'll just say to you that if you think you've gotten there, you really are saying you haven't gotten there.

So I challenge you to hunger for holiness. I want to be holy. I want to be a better husband. I want to be a better pastor. I want to be a better Christian. I want to honor Jesus more. I want to be a better dad.

I want to. I just want to. I just want to represent Jesus far better than I already do. And I hope that you have that hunger in your heart also. And I grew up. My dad was a country boy. He didn't know a whole lot about big city stuff.

[ 26 : 23 ] But you know what he used to call church buildings. He called them meeting houses. You drive by and he said, that's a Baptist meeting house. And he go by and say, that's a Methodist meeting house. Because he taught me from a little boy. That's a meeting house.

That's not the church. And so I hope you grab and understand that concept. I'll explain something real quickly about the prayer meeting. If any of them are saying we're going to meet upstairs unless a slew show up.

We're not going to wait till 8 o'clock. I will put it at 8 o'clock so that you know you're more than welcome to go home. And I don't want anybody to feel any pressure. And it will not necessarily go till 11 o'clock. But I want you to know that I have no 1 hour and 15 minute cutoff time.

So if you want to come and pray. We're going to pray for... My prayer list has 15 pages on it that I will be presenting to you. And I will teach you a little bit about prayer. And we're going to begin some prayer time.

And I only want people that really want to come. So if you're interested, you feel free to come. Let's start with some questions and see what we got. After you are saved, is it still possible to struggle with sins you had before you were saved?



[ 27 : 25 ] What verses show that you can't lose? Use salvation. I like it. Use salvation. New Yorker crept in amongst us back there. Use guys.

Okay. All right. Let's start off with this. Is it possible to struggle with sins you had before you were saved? Of course it's possible to struggle with sin that you had before you were saved.

But you don't have to. You're struggling because you don't realize some truths about yourself. So let me take you over to Romans chapter 6 right quickly. And show you a couple of verses.

Then I'm going to show you some verses about eternal security of the believer. You have to understand. You have to understand.

Now listen to this. Salvation is not something you do. The second you understand that, then it becomes very easy to understand eternal security. And I would like you to write that down somewhere and learn that word.

[ 28 : 24 ] I don't personally preach perseverance of the saints. Sounds like too much pressure on the saints to me. If you don't persevere. I don't really like the term once saved, always saved. Because some of you have taken that to mean once I got saved, I'm always saved.

So I'll live like the devil if I want to. But there is eternal security in salvation. And that is I am saved by the grace of God. And he won't take back what he did to me. And so before I get to the verse I will show you here in Romans chapter 6.

Understand that you didn't have anything to do with getting saved. So you don't have anything to do with getting unsaved. You only received a gift. You only received a gift.

So suppose, suppose that Ed were to give me a gift for Christmas. That would be a good idea, Ed. It's Christmas time. And you're rich.

And have one of your servants buy me a gift. And he gives me a gift. Now what did I do to get the gift? I didn't do anything to give the gift. He walked up to me, hands me a gift.

[ 29 : 26 ] I received the gift. So I didn't do anything to get the gift except extend my hands and take it. I trusted. I believed. I took. And so therefore, since I didn't do anything to get it, it's not mine to lose.

You say, well, I got a job. Well, you probably got a job based on your merit. And you could lose it if you don't do that. But that's not how salvation works. And I'll give you some verses on that in just a second.

But if you would, in Romans chapter 6, understand something that happened when you got saved. In Romans chapter 6, what shall we say then? Verse 1. What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

And here's a strong, great, wonderful, beautiful Bible truth for you. God's love for you is greater than your mess ups. Look at Romans chapter 5, verse 20, if you would.

I'm going to mess around here. Peyton wants me to preach the book of Romans next. It looks like I'm trying to, but I think I'm going to Genesis anyway. Look at verse 20, 520. Moreover, the law entered that the offense might abound.

[ 30 : 27 ] But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. You see, God sent law so you'd know you were wrong. But whenever we were wrong, he sent more grace than there was law.

And God's love for us is far greater. And what Bo just preached about how God gave his son. And with his son, wouldn't he freely give us all things? You were forgiven. You were forgiven your sins.

Do you think God didn't know what you were going to do tomorrow, the day he saved you? He didn't save you on a conditional salvation. So could you struggle? You could, but you shouldn't.

In Romans chapter 6, what shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?

Now watch what happened. I want you to look this way just a second. That piano is going to represent sin. And when I got saved, I turned from sin to Jesus.

[ 31 : 20 ] I died to sin and I'm alive to Jesus. I died to sin and I'm alive to Jesus. So I made my choice.

39 years ago, Betty made her choice. She died to the Fergusons and came alive to the gardeners. And she made her choice. And so you have died to sin. The day you got saved, you said, I don't choose sin.

I choose Jesus. I choose righteousness. And so you were placed into Christ. And so you need to know that verse 5, we have been planted together in the likeness of his death.

We shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. We were buried an old dead man and raised a righteous man. Chapter 6, verse 6. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Now listen to what I'm going to tell you. Your old nature is dead. Your old nature is dead. And, you know, we like to give too much credit to who we were and not enough credit to who we are.

[ 32 : 23 ] Your old nature is dead. It's, it's, your old nature has been dead. You don't need to serve it. You serve it out of habit. You serve it out of not focusing. You serve it out of not knowing you are complete in Christ.

You serve it out of not trusting Jesus and what he did in you. Chapter 6 and verse 11, he said, Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed. Indeed, act like it's really true.

Act like it's really true. You are dead indeed unto sin, but you're alive to God through Christ Jesus, our Lord. Let me show you one more passage. I'd love to preach on that. That one right there. That question.

I would love to just take about two hours and preach to you. But some of you are already nervous about, you said you want to pray, but you're very nervous about it being so late. It's not the Georgia game, you know. You got it, didn't you, Kyle?

Look, if you would, at Colossians chapter 3. Colossians chapter 3. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

[ 33 : 28 ] Set your affection on things above and not on things of the earth. For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory.

But then it says, mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth. So, so watch this. The day, are you, are you, are you looking at this one?

Pay attention, watch this. The day I got saved, the day I became a child of God, I became a completely, totally new creature. But I still live in this earth, and I still got a lot of old habits, and I still got a lot of junk that came along.

I brought a lot of baggage into this new relationship. But I am saved, and my sins are forgiven, and my name is written in heaven, and I am accepted in the beloved, and I am perfect in position in Christ.

But in my, in the, in the actual practice that I have in my life and the way I walk, I'm not always that. But since I am saved, and since I have risen with Christ, I'm going to set my affection on things above.

[ 34 : 30 ] I'm going to seek the things that are above, and I'm going to look at everything in my life that ought not be in my life, and I'm going to cut it away, and throw it away, and say, I don't want to be like that. I'm going to cut it away and throw it away. So you might still struggle with sin, but the longer you live in the things of the Lord Jesus, you're going to say, I don't want that thing.

Now, you listen to what I'm about to tell you. Too many of you focus on what you ought not do. You focus on what you ought not do. What you ought to focus on is what you ought to do. And when you change where you focus, it'll change your life.

That brings me to another verse. Hey, go with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 3. Man, if we're just these things we read in the Bible. In 2 Corinthians chapter 3. You don't have to get mad, Jason. You just leave. 2 Corinthians chapter 3.

2 Corinthians chapter 3. Watch this. Last part of the, last part of the, listen to me. Listen. Catch this. You see, you see, if you will put your eyes on Jesus, you will want to be with him and you will chase him so much.

You won't want to go back to your sin. 2 Corinthians chapter 3 talks about how the Jews in the Old Testament had the law written on tables of stone. So the Ten Commandments were written on these tablets of stone.

[ 35 : 39 ] And he said, but you have it written in your heart. And then he says to him in 2 Corinthians chapter 3. And go down with me, if you would, verse 17. 2 Corinthians 3, 17.

Now the Lord, now the Lord is that spirit. And where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord are changed in the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.

Now watch this. And please, please catch this and let it really make sense to you. You see, here I am in all my sin. And this is all my, these are, this is my, these are my habits and this is my sin.

And some of you are trying to literally change like this. I ain't going to do that anymore. I ain't going to do that anymore. I ain't going to do that. I'm trying not to do that anymore. But I keep looking at you and you sure do look appetizing there, beer. Not physically, you know.

And, and, and, and so I keep being drawn to it because your whole attitude is I, I don't want to do that stuff. I don't want to do that stuff. But every now and then I get weak and I want to go back to it. But when you got right with God, what you're going to do is you're going to turn around and say, I don't really give a rip about any of you guys.

[ 36 : 43 ] I love Jesus. And I don't even see you. And all I focus on is I keep my eyes on the glory of Jesus. And I seek first the kingdom of God. And if you, if you've been risen with Christ, set your heart on the things above, set your affection on things that come, look at all that and just mortify all that other junk and get rid of it.

And just keep seeking Jesus. And that's the Christian laugh. When preachers preach separation to you, they've hurt your feelings telling you, you got to quit all this stuff. When the truth is there are things you ought to quit, but you honestly, emphasis in the Bible is not on quitting.

The emphasis in the Bible is on starting. The emphasis on the Bible isn't on don't. The emphasis on the Bible is on do. The emphasis on the Bible isn't, hey, it isn't like, it isn't like when Hannah got married to Kyle.

Now you're Hannah Shreve, right? Or you Hannah Littlefield. Littlefield, which one are you? I can't hear you. You're Hannah Littlefield, right? You're not a Littlefield? You're not a Littlefield, Chuck? She don't even like you.

She turned her back on you. And see, here's the whole deal. What happens is Hannah doesn't need to walk around all the time saying, I'm not a Littlefield. I don't like the Littlefields. Don't want to be a Littlefield. Don't want to go around in Littlefields.

[ 37 : 54 ] And you know, that's not what she does. Here's what she does. All the time with her husband. I don't know why anybody look at him like that. Amen. I mean, I go, ah.

But, you know, but you see what happens is when you fall in love, when you fall in love, it begins to take over everything you do. And the next thing you know, the next thing you know, her mama might even say, well, honey, this is the way we always do it.

And she said, well, that ain't the way we do it. Because she ain't a Littlefield. You see, do you understand the difference? But it's not because she doesn't want to be a Littlefield. It's because she's too in love with a big, tall, ugly guy.

Say amen. Do you understand that? So turn your salvation, turn your Christianity around. You guys, you're making a big mistake. Too many of you are walking around going, I can't this and I can't that and I can't this and I can't. What in the world?

When I married Betty, I never walk around saying, man, I just can't be with other women. I'm too in love with the one I got. I like being with her. I like holding her. I like touching her.

[ 38 : 58 ] I like hearing her. I like being around her. I like what she smells. I just like everything about her. And so you know what happens? I see all the other women and I never go, man, I wish I had a married Betty. I wish I could still be there.

I always think, man, look how blessed I am. Do you understand the difference? Now, let me get you a couple of verses that might help you. Patrick, John 5, 24. John 5, 24. Verily, verily, truly, truly, I say unto you, he that hears my word.

How many of you have heard his word? Hold your hand up if you heard his word. Now, wait a minute. You heard his word. You didn't just hear Bible. Now, see, that's a big thing here. You didn't just hear Bible because you could say that's just a book.

But you knew when you heard what the word of God said, that it was the word of God, not just a Bible, not just a verse, not just something. You heard God's word. When he said that, he that hears my word, that means you that hear God's word.

And I know I didn't just read something on a page of paper. I heard God's word. How many of you heard that? Huh? He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me. You're believing on God, the Father who sent Jesus.

[ 39 : 57 ] You're believing on the one Bo just talked to you about that said, I love you enough that I send my son and I hold nothing back. Have everlasting life. Write down somewhere. You have it. You have it.

You asked me about can you lose your salvation? You have it. It doesn't say you might have. Doesn't say I hope you have. Doesn't say you conditionally have. It says you have.

Everlasting life. And then it says a word that is just an extremely difficult Greek word and even harder in the English. It says everlasting. Now, let me break that really hard word down for you.

It's lasting forever. Well, ain't that smart? Everlasting. So you see the whole word. He didn't say I give you temporary life.

You get around some Christians and they'll say, I just hope I can make it through. I know God saved me. I know he gave me eternal, everlasting life, but I ain't sure it's everlasting. I think he might have lied to me. You did not walk into Walmart and buy some piece of junk from China that might tear up.

[ 41 : 02 ] The God of heaven gave you everlasting, forever life. He said he did. He's either a liar or he's telling the truth. And if you have the guts to tell him he's a liar, then you probably aren't saved.

He said everlasting life. He said, and now you have it. He said, have, have. You have everlasting life. But he didn't stop there. Then he said, and you shall not come into condemnation.

You shall not come into condemnation. That means you ain't going to get condemned. That means God is never going to say, Evan, I know I told you you're saved, but I'm fixing to fry you.

Put him in hell. He said, that ain't happening. If you heard his word, if you believed on him that sent you, he's not going to, you're never going to be condemned. And then the next one says, but is passed from death unto life.

It's like there's this list of them is going to die. You're on the dying list or there's a living list and a dying list. And you and I have been taken off the dying list and put on the living list. Jesus said in John chapter 11, verse 25 ish, 27 ish.

[ 42 : 11 ] I don't know. You can look it up. He said, he said, if you believe in me, you will never die. You will never die. So I could give you more verses, but John, thank you, sir.

Holy spirit said it's John 11, 26. Amen. Man, but the, the, the, so you get ahold of this. We are saved forever by what Jesus did on the cross at Calvary. And, and that it's not because you're good and you're going to mess up tomorrow and you're going to sin again.

But here's the whole deal. He gave you eternal life. You did not earn it. You did not buy it. You did not purchase it. The wages of sin, Romans 6, 23, the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.

The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. All right. Give me another question or two. It's almost seven. We'll steal a couple of minutes. What is second Corinthians for?

Why is second Corinthians four, one, the theme of second Corinthians? Well, uh, you know, I can only tell you that. I think that that makes a good verse to go with second Corinthians chapter four and verse one.

[ 43 : 16 ] And Paul is saying he's been given a ministry and he wants to do that ministry. Well, and, uh, you've been given a ministry and you ought to do that ministry. Well, and it's all, uh, the whole book is about, uh, the, the ministry.

Paul was given in the ministry. You're given and what we're supposed to be doing. And if you've got another verse, it's better. I'll take it next. Why are we ordaining deacons? Well, you'll hear about that Thursday night, but I'll tell you why.

Uh, because I want our church to honor and respect lay leadership because I can't, can't stand dictatorial power hungry, run the show pastors because pastors come and pastors go.

And I won't vision to keep going until Jesus comes. And what ends up happening, if you're not careful, the next guy who takes my place, whenever I pass on, move on, or get retired or fired by you guys might not be the right guy.

And what this church needs are strong men that, you know, that I respect and you respect. And I'm hoping we name a whole bunch of them. It's not about them. It's not about them sweeping floors.

[ 44 : 43 ] It's not about them taking care of widows, though. They already do that or they wouldn't have been asked to, to serve as a deacon. It's about saying to you, don't just look at Austin. Know that God has raised up in this church, men of character, men who love Jesus and men who will hold the line.

And so we have, as a church, more responsibility than almost any church I know of. And to be blunt honest, I'm trying to set vision up for 2030. And we have Vision Baptist Missions.

And we have Cal Shreve who's only like 21 or 22 years old. And if the Lord tarries, he can be a missionary for the next 40 or 45 years. And Vision Baptist Missions is here at this church.

And some pastor could on a whim come in and throw Vision Baptist Missions out on its ear. But if we have strong lay leadership that would say, Pastor, we love you. We'll follow you. But no, Vision Baptist Church has Vision Baptist Missions.

And Vision Baptist Church is going to keep on having Vision Baptist Missions. And we were here before you were here. And if somebody's got a packet, ain't going to be us. Was that mean enough?

[ 45 : 48 ] And I think I need somebody that I have to be held accountable to. I don't think any preacher ought to ever think that he is so high and mighty that nobody has the right to call his hand.

And so I believe that it would be a great thing for our church to have and know that there are men here that we honor and respect. They won't become the deciding factor. They won't become the decision makers.

They won't become the door keepers or the floor sweepers. But they will be strong leaders of our church. They will, I hope, take a stand for Jesus. Hold our church where it ought to be.

When Jeff Bush came on board as the director of our mission, you probably questioned why we need him. There's only a handful of families. But here's exactly what Austin Gardner sees. I am 58 years old.

I had kidney cancer this year. I don't know when the Lord might take me. But there's a lot of missionaries around the world that look to Vision Baptist Church more than you probably understand or think. And you might say, well, they look to you.

[ 46 : 52 ] Well, if they look to me, we're going to have a problem because the church can stay. Preachers come and preachers go. God buries his workers but never his work. But by Jeff coming on the scene, we extended the life of Vision Baptist Church or missions by 30 years because he's young.

He's in his 30s. He's got 35 more years. I have 10 years, 15 years. I don't know when you'll get tired of me. I'm 58. Will you let me pastor you at 68?

Will I have my brain left at 68? My brother made the comment somebody asked him about us and he said gardeners are stronger than oxes at 75. They just don't know where they are.

And that very well could be me. And so Jeff can help the mission keep going and I want some strong men. Some strong men that are members of the church that aren't leaving. I want some senders.

I want some foundations. I want some men that will stand up and say, we're not going to fight about little stuff. But some men that are going to be able to say, no, pastor, you can't. And just to be blunt honest, a friend of mine, a friend of mine was a member of a church and he'd been a missionary.

[ 47 : 59 ] He said, now that church for years and that church changed pastors. And when they changed pastors, a new pastor said to him, our church is not going to take care of your stuff anymore. And they put all of his stuff in a box and handed it to him and sent him on the road.

Another pastor I know asked six people, six families in the church to leave. He just went to him individually. He felt like they gave him too much strife. And so he asked them to all individually leave. Five of them no longer go to church anywhere.

One of them stayed in church. It's amazing. Get out of church. You just quit. My sister happened to be one of them and told me that story on Monday. Other pastors are known to just about appropriate all the offerings and all the buildings.

And they run everybody off and they keep them. I don't think that's biblical. I don't think it's biblical. A church is an assembly and it's you. I serve you. You don't serve me. I work for you.

You don't work for me. I'm not the high and mighty highfalutin run the show guy. I might like to be. And if I am, somebody needs to clip my wings. So that's why we want to ordain. That's why Austin Gardner wants to ordain deacons.

[ 49 : 02 ] And most people would hate, you know, pastors joke about how you hate deacons and deacons cause all the trouble. But I would say to you that godly deacons would be the greatest gift a church could have. And so I look forward to having some great deacons.

One more question. Boy, it's getting late. Y'all are going to shoot me. When you read the Bible, should you take notes? If so, what's the best way to take them? Is it okay to start with reading one to two chapters a day? What if you don't understand something?

Well, that's exactly why you ought to be involved in foundations. All right, watch this. Yeah, I take notes. If you want to take notes, I would take notes every day. I do take notes. If you're not already receiving an email from me, every day I do my devotions.

And I put them on austongardner.net. And you can receive them in an email. And I write a few words about a passage of scripture. I copy and I paste it. It'll come to you in an email. Or you can go to my website.

I believe taking notes helps you remember what you've read. And so I would pick one small truth or one verse or one thing. And I would write that down. I think if I had a question, I'd write that down.

[ 50 : 03 ] And I would come to church. And that's what this place is for. When we assemble, there are other people in this room who know a little bit more than you know. And they are good, godly people.

Boy, I would go hit them up. I would talk to Micah and Chuck who are going to be deacons. I'd talk to John Pearson. I'd talk to Trent and Robert. I'd talk to Brother Frick. I would, Pastor Frick, I'd go to him and I'd say, you know, I was reading this and I'd just like a little help.

And there's a, I could name ten more. This church has got a lot of very good Bible-knowing people in it. And you can talk to them and ask them and then you grow. And if you ask them and they don't know, guess what?

Then they'll want to find out the answer and they'll grow. And you'll be provoking them to grow and they'll be provoking you to grow. So let's all get together and work together and learn more about the Bible. I think we'll save the rest of those questions. Let me explain to you just a second about prayer.

I'm going to start in about 15 minutes. I'll give you that much time after the service to shake hands. I'll be upstairs. And I'm going to show you, you won't be on your knees. Some of you might say, I ain't going up or you ain't putting me on my knees.

[ 51 : 05 ] Well, you ain't putting me on mine either. Way too much and my knees are too tender. Stay on my knees for any three hours. I can promise you that. There's no Bible verse that talks about one posture being better than another.

At one time at the mission board I used to serve at, a man came in and taught us on prayer. And he said that when you pray, if you don't have two knees on the floor while you're praying, you're only half committed to God.

And I just remember sitting there thinking, where in the world did he get that? In the Bible, sometimes they prayed laying down. Sometimes they prayed with their hands up, standing straight up. I don't know where he got that, but anyway, he didn't know either.

But it makes a good message. You know, real good Bible preaching. You don't need Bible. You just got to make something up. And people are dumb enough to listen because they don't study this. I hope that ain't true here.

So what we're going to do is you'll pray with us and you can come and stay for a 10-minute period or until we finish. And I doubt we're going to be until 11 o'clock.

[ 52 : 00 ] But what is going to happen is we're going to start and I'm going to say, all right, for the next 10 minutes, here's a list of prayer requests. And I'm going to teach you how I want to ask you to pray for them. You'll be praying with three or four other people, taking turns, and I'm going to show you how to do that.

And then you'll stop that and I'm going to call you and I'm going to say, all right, here's another set of prayer requests. And we're going to pray about those. We're going to talk about some things that went on. And so we're going to break the night up. And sometimes you can go to the bathroom.

You can pray through the first section and say, I think I'm going home. Well, you can go home. There's no pressure, no guilt, no manipulation. I'll not ever be. That's not how God's people work. God's people work because they love Jesus and they want to.

And so if you say, well, brother, I just don't think I can stay. You know what I think? God bless you. Don't worry about it. Don't worry about it one bit. But if you think you'd like to stay and you think you'd like to participate in a prayer time, feel free to do so.

And we'll put some men, three or four or five men together praying and three or four or five women together, three or four or five young people. But it's going to be a strictly dedicated to prayer time. I feel like if there's a weakness in our ministry and my ministry, not yours, my ministry, not yours.

[ 53 : 01 ] Please understand. It is that I haven't led you to pray enough. And as a church and as a congregation, I think it would be good if we together ask God, we're going to pray for every country in the world before the night's over.

Every country by name. We're going to pray for every country by name. I'm going to tell you what to ask for for every country. We're going to pray for every church member that the church software spit out.

That doesn't mean the girls have clicked everything right. But every church member that we got in that list, we're going to pray for them by name. We're going to pray for any requests that any of the missionaries sent in. We're going to pray for all of our missionaries.

We're going to pray for our elected officials, at least some of them. I'm not sure I got near enough. We're going to pray. I mean, we're going to do everything I know about praying. I'll read you a verse, explain to you why. I know we're supposed to pray for.

We're going to do some of that. And believe me, I don't I'm not trying to get you to say 11. I'll tell you why I put 11 o'clock and the reason I announced it that way. I want you to know that it's not an hour and 15 minutes.

[ 53 : 59 ] We're going to pray. And so I hope that you'll come if you would like to. But do not feel any pressure. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia.

For more information, log on to [www.visionbaptist.com](http://www.visionbaptist.com) where you can find our service times, location, contact information, and more audio and video recordings.