

Hey how are we? Are we good? Okay, let's go to Psalm 139. That's where we'll start, and my plan is to finish out The Path series tonight. And then from there we'll start the book of Colossians next week. I've outlined it, but I've learned that that outline means nothing. And so we'll be in Colossians anywhere from 15 weeks to 2 years. And so, we'll just get into it and see how it plays itself out.

Let's get to work here. I want to talk to you about a historic passion of mine. Something that I've talked about quite a bit, but I just don't think we can come back to it enough because we got to have new eyes to see. So I really want to talk to you about mission or evangelism (although I don't really care for the word evangelism). I was born a skeptic. That didn't happen to me. Like there wasn't an event that happened to me that made me go, "Well, I just don't believe You." I came out of the womb like that. Talk to my parents. They can tell you. I mean, like if you come and tell me a movie's awesome, my first response, it's probably not that awesome. Okay? I don't know why, it's just how I'm wired. I hate that about myself. Honestly, I wish I was more of the um. . .well, I love Michael Bleecker. Michael Bleecker, if he eats something, it's the best thing he's ever ate in his life. He's like "This is the best hamburger I've ever had. . .this is the best CD I have ever heard." So, I wish I was more positive, but I just wasn't built that way. Now, I'm born that way into a house of faith. And what I mean by that is my mom is the daughter of a Baptist minister. My grandfather, Eugene Lewis, was a Baptist preacher in Missouri and also did missions in Missouri, which was a Baptist position, where you were the director of missions over a group of churches. He helped them do their missions programs. So that was my grandfather. My mother has always had just a strong faith, not a dogmatic one, just a strong one. So you felt that in my house growing up. And what I mean by that is you could feel the presence of faith, but there wasn't a lot of dogma. So, what I mean by dogma is, although my Mom had taught us about Christ, we didn't have a lot of "You can listen to this music, but you can't listen to this music. . .You can go here, you can't go here." We just didn't have a lot of that. And some of that I'm actually bitter about. To this day, I can quote any Kenny Rodgers lyric. . .ever written! And I wish that wasn't true. Now if he was simply "The Gambler", I'm in. That's a very masculine song. "You've got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em, know when to walk away, know when to run. You never count your money when you're sittin' at the table." Why? Because "There'll be time enough to count when the dealin's done." Alright? And so if that where I was, I was fine with it, but I tend to go "You picked a fine time to leave me, Lucille, four hungry children, and a crop in the field. I've had some bad times, lived through some sad times, and this time your hurt'n won't heal. You picked a fine time to leave me, Lucille." Now, I've been through Recovery a couple of times, and I probably need a couple of more, to purge that out of me. Over the last 10 years, I've listened to a lot of hip hop to try to put that to death, and so, we'll see how this ends. So I didn't grow up in the dogmatic "these movies are bad, this music is bad."

Now you can get ridiculous with it, but it was loose, alright? And I'm grateful for that. I really am grateful for that. I have a rebellious spirit and probably would've gone really bad if they would have cranked it down. And so, but my Mom's faith was always evident. She was a prayer. She wasn't afraid to talk to us about Jesus. She'd drag us to church when she could drag us to church, and that's kind of the home I grew up.

Now, my mother's faith wasn't enough to make me go, "I want this. I'm in." I was always kind of skeptical. There were a lot of holes, in my mind, with Christianity. So, because of my skepticism and my mother's faith, I didn't go atheist; I went agnostic. Atheism to me, always seemed really silly. And if you're an atheist, I'm glad you're here, but in the end you don't believe there is any such thing as love. So if you'll be logical and start to walk through that, "There is no such

thing in love, that's just chemicals in your brain," if that's just all there is, there's no need for fidelity. And if there's no need for fidelity, any moral system anywhere begins to shatter and fall apart. So I couldn't just get there. I couldn't get "There is no love, there is no beauty, there is no meaning, there's no \_\_\_\_\_, and it's all chemicals." I just couldn't get there. And a part of that was just my Mom's steadfast faith in our home. So I became very agnostic, because I didn't get, "There's one God governing everything, and if you don't do what He says, He's going to blow up the earth." I couldn't get there either. And when I was growing up there was a lot of the Left Behind stuff really churning and moving. And so remember this song? "Life was filled guns of war, and everyone got trampled on the floor, I wish had all been ready." I mean that's kind of the stuff that I'm going, "Uh, I don't know about that either." But, somewhere around 8th or 9th grade, a really beautiful little intern comes to the church and starts to talk with me about God. So I'm listening. Okay? Cute college girls have an unbelievable effect on 8th and 9th grade boys, alright? We just tend to go "Oh, what was that? Yeah, I'll read that. . .Yeah I'll listen to that. Yes I will. I will listen to that. We can get together and talk about it, yes." And God brought that to me, in a form of a girl named Marcy Hawkins, who is now married and I believe lives in Arkansas or something like that.

But anyway, so my Mom's faith kind of led me to these conversations with Marcy Hawkins where she would give me books and CD's and we'd talk about it. I'd have questions, and she answered those questions. And from there, she connected me with a guy named Ronny Hazard, who was a Sunday school teacher at First Baptist in Texas City. I loved Ronny because he was strict but fair and didn't use a lot of religious jargon. If you don't have a church background, religious jargon is unbelievably confusing. Like if you hear "Redeemed by the blood of the lamb" and you don't know anything about the Old Testament or the sacrificial system, I'm thinking to myself "If they pull an animal out, I'm gone. If they pull some poor goat on the stage, I will get up and sprint out of this room. If they're killing animals tonight, I'm out" And so, Ronny didn't have a lot of that but was after the Scriptures and was able to explain my questions. He wasn't afraid to just say to me, "You know I don't really know." Later I ended up lockering next to a guy named Jeff Faircloth, for football. And up until Jeff Faircloth, my experience with anyone my age who said they were a Christian is that they were uninformed about their faith and usually embarrassed. That was my background with it.

So, if you remember this, Christian bracelets were all the rage. I could spot them and could start spiritual conversations because they wore bracelets that either said "WWJD?" or really what was big when I was in high school was they would have the beads, right? "The black was sin, the red one was blood, white was you being washed whiter than snow, blue was baptism, and yellow was the streets of gold." So they would use that to share the gospel, or they'd wear a t-shirt that said "Lord's Gym" or something like that, and it would have Jesus pushing up the cross on his back, dripping blood. And you'd be like "That's a really weird t-shirt, bro. Help me." And so, I hadn't met anybody like Jeff, because Jeff literally walks up to my locker and says "I'm a Christian. I believe in Jesus Christ. I want to tell you about Him. When do you want to do that?" It was like, "I'm going to let you have control when we have the conversation, but we're having the conversation. So is that now, is that later?" So that kind of threw me off, and Jeff becomes my guide through Evangelism for the next two years. So he begins to take me through things, begins to explain things to me and he begins to unpack, "This is what this means." He was also one of the first guys I ever met that would go, "I don't have an idea what that means. Let me go look. . .I have no idea. Let me go talk." And he would bring me articles and books. This was a very long two year deal.

He graduated, went to Texas A&M to play ball for them, and then we just kind of kept up. In fact, I just got a letter from him this week. So we still kind of keep up with each other. And Jeff was kind of my guide. Now Jeff turned me over to a guy named Jerry Hendricks. Jerry Hendricks was the youth minister at First Baptist Church in Texas City, and he was the guy that was the first to sit me down and say, "Do you not see that what you're doing is extremely dangerous?" So I was like, "How is me asking these questions, to be researching, to be studying so dangerous?" He goes, "If there is a God, if there is one, do you not think that you are going to be held accountable for all your discovering, all your research, all

your finding? Do you not think that's upping the ante on how He views you and how He sees you?" No, right or wrong, it was compelling to me because up until that point I wasn't like, "I'm going to have to do something with what I discover." I mean, I don't know why it just clicked in head so I'm just gathering information and I would find out why.

Now, the second year I went to youth camp (the first year weirded me out, so nothing really happened then and I just kind of avoided things), the guy who was preaching starts talking about God being outside of time about how often Jesus see into the future and tells the people, "This is what's coming. . ." And then he goes to Hebrews 12 and shows where it says, "Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross. . ." And he starts unpacking the cross and goes, "Where is the joy in the cross?" So he shows the systematic slaughter of Christ on the cross and goes, "Where is the joy?" Now he turns it and says that the joy set before Christ on the cross, was the purchase of sons and daughters for God in the cross. We were the joy set before Him that day. And in that moment, for whatever reason, the Holy Spirit ignited all that kindling that God had been gathering around me and I believed. I mean, I believed. I didn't have all my questions answered, I still had some real issues with some of the things I saw in Christendom, but in that moment, I believed. I mean I was in, all in and was en fuego (on fire) after that. I mean, not only believed but was a little evangelist. And so with all that I studied, all that I had read, I began to go, "Hey, I need to talk with you." And I would begin to share my faith with others, which was really strange because I had always been the guy that would point out the fundamental flaws with Christianity. I'll give you an example. There was a little prayer thing I was one time. Like this was who I was. They were praying for me at the prayer meeting, but I know they're a bunch of Baptist free-willers. And so I'm going, "Hey, if God answers your prayer, is that not a violation of the free-will you say He's given to me? I mean if God makes me believe right now, is that not a violation of how you say He has wired the universe to be?" And they would talk about I need more faith and then I would always go, "Okay, but ultimately then, how do I do that? Do I just turn that on?" So they would kind of get frustrated with me. So that was who I kind of was.

Now all of a sudden, I'm at the table going "You got to believe this. . . You got to listen to this. . ." So that became my world. That's where we learned that I kind of had a knack for explaining things in a way that people without backgrounds in church could understand, grasp and ask want to ask more questions. And so that led, well honestly, to up here. They funny thing is like 3 or 4 months later, I kind of had the epiphany, "Oh no, they got me." Like up until then, I didn't realize it. In fact, I was in a worship service, on a Wednesday night, we were singing and I wanted to lift my hands. And I was like "Oh no, they got me. How did they do this? When did this happen? They got me. I'm sick of this dumb song I thought was lame two years ago, and now I'm trying not to cry and I want to raise my hands. And I'm still not going up front, I don't care. I'm not going up front." So, they got me. Now this was a long, drawn out process, and I'm so grateful for everyone who was involved in that process, how each one played such a significant part in God wooing me and drawing me to Himself.

Now I want to talk to you about the mission that we've been called to, because I think that there are some things that got perverted about it and as numerics became more important than transformed lives. So most of us know what evangelism is but have no real concept about what the mission of God is. And so we know to share our faith. And let me just be really honest with you. Evangelism, the sharing of our faith does not have at its core, the desire for converts. It has at its core, a passion and desire for transformed lives. There's a big difference between being a disciple of Jesus Christ and someone who says, "I'm a good person, I go to church, I was baptized when I was 12. I'm a Christian." Those things are very different from one another. And really, if you study them historically, they're really just steeped in manipulation. You being saved from hell but not being reconciled to God does not exist. Are you tracking with the difference in that? Heaven is not a place for those who are afraid of hell; it's a place for those who love God. This is a fundamental misunderstanding of what evangelism is. Did you know in the great awakenings, specifically in the Finney Era, there benches called the guilt seats And if you were bringing lost people, you would sit in the guilt seats. That way, the minister would know where the lost people where, and then in his sermon he could concentrate on the guilt seat in

the crescendo and would even call people out. You can go and read Finney's old stuff. He'd go, "You sir, you sir, will not your wife weep herself night after night after night with the thought of you tormented in hell?" And you know, you've just called out in front of a 1,000 people, "So now we're going to sing for 45 so you can get saved." Does this not reek of manipulation to anyone else? Do we not see culturally everywhere people go "No, I'm a Christian," but have zero affection for Jesus Christ, have no transformation in their life, have no desire to live a holy life. They just go to church, and they're good people. They got saved when they were twelve. They know nothing of the Word, probably don't pray outside dinner, are doing their best with their own effort to be good people. That's a convert but not necessarily a disciple, a follower of Jesus Christ. There's a fundamental misunderstanding.

Mission is about the reign and rule of God. That's what it's about. So the Creator of the universe creates all things, good, lovely, and beautiful. Then sin enters the world and fractures all of that. It busts all of it. God sends Christ, Christ absorbs the wrath of God and in so doing, reconciles all things, us and everything else, back to God. And it will be consummated in all things, because we can see that it's still broken. So Christ is reconciling all things back to God, back to that perfection, back to that shalom in the beginning. And we are a part of that, the reign and rule of God. If we study it historically, you could go back as far as Genesis 12, He says to Abram "Through you and through your line, I'm going to create a people, and through that people I'm going to bless all nations on Earth." And if you'll read through the Psalms and prophets, it continually talks about, "The nations. . .the nations. . .the nations. . .I'm going to bless. . .I'm going to save. . .I'm going to ransom. . .I'm going to draw to Myself. . .I'm going to reconcile. . ." He says it over and over again. And if you'll just go down historically, you'll see that it's happening. From the explosion in Christianity in Asia, in Africa, South America, it's happening. What God said would happen, happened. In our first copy of Genesis, He's saying "I'm going to do this." And we're watching it play out. This is what the mission is about, the reconciliation of all things to God who created all things, good right, and lovely. And He's going to restore these things. That's what we're in. That's what this is about. So a person who just goes, "I'm going to go to church and try to be a good person," that's not a transformed life; that's church attendance, and that's a lame hobby, a lame, lame, lame, lame hobby. And that's the first kind of mistake I think when it comes to evangelism.

The second mistake is that evangelism or mission is not an activity; it's how we see the world. It's how we understand the world to function. Let me you a couple of things. Psalm 139, we're going to pick it up in 13. "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them." Now, he just said that God wove you. This is a great text that's been hijacked by Women's Ministry. "Fearfully and wonderfully made..." You, yes you are, but that's not a text about women. It's not written by a woman, and it's not necessarily written directly to women. Although you are fearfully and wonderfully made and need to quit comparing yourself to other women. Comparison is a horrible idol. But what that text says is that God was intricately involved in your creation in really two ways: your form, your physical body and in your unseen substance; your personality, your personhood. This is Biblical cry to individualism, not wicked individualism but just the fact that God made us differently. It's a celebration of that.

So here's what I know, I am 6' 5" and about 200 pounds. That's no mistake. I have a crazy metabolism, alright? I burned off lunch, about 45 minutes after lunch. . .by taking a nap. And God kind of wove me that way. I have what adults call "a voice that carries." I always have. I just have a strong voice. It's always been strong. The Lord wired me that way according to this text because He knew all the days that He had for me before any of them were here. And so, He's designing me and wiring me for what He had in me. Now you, that's going to be different, because some of you have very analytical minds, some of you aren't skeptical at all. We're just very different from one another, and that's because God knew for

where he was going to put you and what you had to do. You need to be wired, you need to be addressed like this. And God did that with me, just like He did that with you.

Now, let's go look at one more text, one of my favorites in the Bible. it's Acts 17. We're going to pick it up in verse 22. Okay, so far, you have been wired in regards to your physical form and your personality, created by, wired by God. Acts 17 is going to answer why He would do that. Starting in verse 22, "So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you." Now just to catch you up culturally, in Athens in this time period, it was easier to find a god than it was a man. They're an extremely religious culture. So much so that that they were nervous and went, "Let's just build them all "to the unknown god" in case we get a Clash of the Titans thing happening here." And if one gets really angry, we can go "No, no, no, that was you! Why are you so upset? This one was you! We just didn't know your name. Look, we're putting your name on it, right now!" So they were hyper-religious and they even had an unknown god. Paul comes in and goes, "Let me tell you about the 'unknown god.'" Let's keep reading. Pay real close attention, because I'm going to reference this for the rest of the sermon: "The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place. . ."

Now stop there, and I want to these two together. So Psalm 139 says that God knit you, wired you, in regards to your personality, your aptitudes, your gifts, your desires, your passions, the thing you're drawn to. He did that and then He put you in a time period, and a geographical location, and now here's the crescendo of why He did that. Look at this. Verse 27, ". . .that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.'" This is what he's doing here. Whether you're a believer or not, you've been gifted, wired, and placed, so that we might find Him, though He is not far from any of us.

So, if you're a believer, that means your neighborhood, your work, the things you're drawn to, your hobbies, all of that is eternally significant. If you're not a believer and you're here because somebody has invited you, you're seeing what the Bible says would happen. A neighbor, a friend, a coworker has begun to talk with you about God and has begun to invite into the community of faith. Now whether you're coming in and not, I'm don't know, but He's begun to do that. And He has done that because He has wired the world to work in such a way that you are finding and crossing paths with someone who is trying to introduce you to the God of the universe. It means that God has begun to woo you to Himself, and that this isn't some random accident that you're here. It means for the Christian, that evangelism isn't something we do, it's the lenses by which we see the entire world. So we don't do evangelism. Our whole lives are about the rule and reign of God, Almighty. So our neighborhood is about the rule and reign of God and God reconciles all things to Himself. Our workplace is about the rule and reign of God. Our hobbies are about the rule and reign of God.

And can I be honest with you? Psalm 139 says, "All of the days of my life were marked out by God Almighty, before one of them were here." Which means, 6 weeks ago, when we found out I have malignant brain cancer and we begin the battle, I begin a whole new set of relationships that, in the end, are about the gospel of Jesus Christ and the rule and reign of God. Which means, I met a neurosurgeon. It was the first time I ever met one. They're actually a lot nicer than what you would think. So I go and meet with Dr. David Barnett and here's the thing. I'm not going in, going, "This is a neurosurgeon." I'm going in, going, "The Lord is crossing my path with a neurosurgeon. And so, if he's a brother, I'm going to encourage him. If he's not a believer, I want to try to reveal faith in Christ in the cross to him and that's how I'm going in." And I met an neuro-oncologist, a radiation oncologist and after surgery met a lot of OT's, PT's, and some NT's,

and RN's. And they all have souls! And in so each one of those encounters, I'm trying to encourage, edify and point toward Jesus Christ. They're not random accidents. And the cancer that I have is not punitive. I'm not in trouble with it. It is a part of the days that were marked out for me. And so if those days get me to be 90 and surly, praise His name. If those days get me 40 and emaciated, praise His name. Because the next 5 years, in every one of those paths and crosses, there's one thing to do, which is to point the rule and reign of God in it all. So this is how we are to see the world.

My fear is that you'll buy into a lot of lies. There's a guy at the church that I've talked to who used to work for OshKosh, and he was just like, "I just make children's clothes. I mean I just don't know how in the end if that is a really great use of my life." So I had to go, "Bro, you're thinking about it all wrong. The children's overalls you make is'nt the point. The point is you get to go to work with a group of men and women whom God allotted and ordained and put around you so that they might seek and find Him. Your opportunity is to point people towards the good news of Jesus Christ where you are." That's true about your neighbor, your hobbies, that's true about the things you're drawn to. All of this is a part of God's plan. And if we could put those lenses on, it would change. We don't go do evangelism; we trust the Lord, we walk with obedience, we have open hands, open hearts and open homes and that's what we do.

Now, this leads me to my last point when it comes to mission and evangelism. Mission, is inescapably contextual. Not everybody is the same. We're just absolutely drawn to styles, and we want to make styles and philosophies ultimate. And so, here's what I see. I see kind of two camps when it comes to mission and evangelism, right now. You've got one that's the relational camp and they're like, "You know what? I just want to build long-term relationships, I want to be a good neighbor and I want to have them over for dinner." That's how we want to share the gospel. The problem I see over here is that you just never get around to sharing the gospel. Have you ever heard the quote, "Share the gospel always, and if necessary, use words?" That is a dumb quote. If you have that on a coffee cup, please smash that coffee cup and get a coffee cup that has a Bible verse on it, preferably one that's not on other coffee cups. Like, "The inhabitants of earth are like nothing to Him." Put that on a coffee cup. That is a great verse. "The Lord is in the heavens, He does whatever pleases Him." That's a great coffee cup. So here's the problem. You're eventually going to have to use words. It is a Bible Belt myth that by you not ordering a beer with dinner that someone is going to go, "I believe you can lead me to eternal life." It is a Bible Belt myth that you not using bad language is going to make someone go, "I need Jesus Christ. Please explain Him to me." Now, let me be honest. You can live your life in such a way that causes people to ask questions about your faith. You absolutely can. Can I just give you a couple of them in the real world? Talk positive about your wife. Talk positive about your spouse. Talk about how awesome she is. And watch how you'll draw a crowd. I mean, men will just flock to you and go, "Hey man, help me because my girl is driving me crazy." And you get to talk about the grace shown to you by God Almighty. And that by being a recipient of that grace, it enables you to give grace. And then here you go, you're off running. So you can live your life in such a way, but you eventually have to open your mouth and you'll eventually have to talk about sin and the cross and our hope in Jesus Christ. You're going to have open your mouth! So the problem with the relational bent is that you just never get around saying anything about Jesus.

Now, the other one right now, is kind of the "Way of the Master," use the Law. Have you ever seen Kirk Cameron on TV doing this deal? It's the street-evangelism, shot gun approach, and there's some pros to that. In fact, I do it on an airplane. Because you can't go anywhere, I've got this thing I do every time, where I'm like, "Hey, what do you do?" And they'll tell me what they do, and because we're a polite culture most of the time, they'll ask me what I do. I'll say "I teach." And what do they have to ask? "What do you teach?" I always respond, "Hedonism." "You teach hedonism?" "Absolutely, I do. I teach unashamed pursuit of pleasure of all things." "Okay, help unpack that for me." Because everyone thinks hedonism is sex. So I just start with the great C.S. Lewis quote, "If I find nothing on this Earth that satisfies me, maybe I was created for something greater or higher than this Earth" So in the end, I just kind of share, "Hey our ultimate pleasure is found in a relationship with God Almighty. And the rest of these pleasures are shadows of them. They are gifts of Him." Then I get to share the gospel. So I'm not against that approach. I'm just saying that the

problem over here is there is an immense amount of pride and browbeating that goes on over here It's like, "Everyone should be ashamed if you're not doing what these people are doing." And that's elevating the philosophy over the heart of what we've been called to. And people are very prone to do this, they're prone to do this with everything. They tend to pick a philosophy or a style, they tend to pick a teacher, they tend to pick a way and go, "That's what I'm doing. That's the right way." When in the end it might be right, but it might not be the only way.

Let me show you what I mean here. Go to 1 Corinthians 1 and we'll close this thing out. By the way, what we read in Acts is a perfect example of contextualization. He's in an extremely religious culture and an extremely religious city and what does he do? He says, "I saw a statue to an unknown god. What you don't know, what you know in part, let me explain in full." Then he begins to dissect their belief system. And here is what he says. He says that "the unknown God is the God of heaven and earth." You see, in their mind, there were gods of the sky, the god of the ground, the god of the ocean, the god of farming and the god of children. There were like all these different gods. And Paul doesn't go, "Hey, that's stupid." He says instead, "This God is God of heaven, and earth. He's got it all." And then he points out a really easy, basic, "You should be able to see this by doing this," by saying "He is not served by human hands as though He needed anything." All those temples would have temple attendants, whose job was to care for the god, feed the god, bathe the god, wash the god. And Paul, in a very inoffensive way, says, "If you have to feed him, how is he supposed to take care of you? If you've got to give her a bath, how is she supposed to take care of you?" And he begins to dissect their world view. And he even goes as so far as to say, "He made from one man, all nations." So people tend to have gods of culture, and he's saying, "No, it's not the Athenian god and the Jew god and the white god and the Indian god and the Roman god. No, there's one God who is God of all, and these cultures are all a picture of beauty and His creativity." So, all of the cultures are celebrated, there's good in all of the cultures, there's good in all of the nationalities and there's also sin in all those. So we've got to harness beauty of God in all cultures. And so he's systematically breaking down their belief system. This is an example of contextualization.

This week, I had a great conversation with a guy, and this is what he asked me. This is the first time it's happened to me in 15 years. I don't if I've heard this before. He said, "Can you get for me some articles or books on the historicity of scripture?" I've never had anyone ask me that before. So, he's an intellect, he's a thinker, he loves history and he wants to know "Are the Scriptures historically accurate?" Now, that has not been the normal conversation I've had. Most people will want to talk about God and Jesus Christ through the lenses of their own personal experience. So they want to talk about the gospel through the fact that they lost their mom at 12. They want to talk about the gospel through the fact that their wife left them. They want to talk about the gospel through the fact that their husband is a bum. They want to talk about the gospel through the lenses of their child being sick. They want to talk about God in view of some personal experience. It's a rare thing to come across a guy who goes "Can you give me an article on the historicity of Scripture?" Now I don't go to the guy whose 12 year old son who is struggling with a disease and go, "Here's a great article on the historicity of Scripture. Why don't you take a look at that and we'll talk?" It's contextualization. It's, "This guy wants that, but this guy needs me to talk about the goodness of God in all things, as hard as it to see in certain times." And so you contextualize it.

I've also met some people who are just naturally spiritual. And so in those places, you kind of have to tweak and go, "Okay, let's talk about what you believe here." And I know this will get me in trouble, but let's just do it. There's an unreal amount of silliness right now under the banner of tolerance, and I'll give you an example using the high priestess herself. I love me some Oprah (that's not true). Let me point out to you how she twists things in such a way that she wants to make herself look compassionate and tolerant, when she's just as intolerant and maybe more aggressive than any of the monotheistic major religions. Christians believe, Jews believe and Muslims believe that one God who will judge, by certain standards, mankind. Now, Christianity is the anti- religion in that we believe that we will be judged through the blood of Christ and be found spotless and blameless, not because of behavioral modification but because

of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. That's what we believe. So we don't believe we're climbing a ladder. We don't believe that we have to do these things to be saved. That's religion. It's outside-in. The gospel and Christianity is the anti-religion. It teaches contrary to what religion teaches that you have to do these things to be saved. Now Oprah will come in and, although the Muslims, Christians and Jews will say, "This is the way up the mountain," she'll say, "No, no, no. They've all got it wrong. You can go up anyway you want up the mountain. You can go this way, you can go this way and you can go this way. We're all climbing the same mountain. We'll all get to the top. You believe what you want to believe, we'll believe what we want to believe and we'll meet at the top." That sounds so good, and we go, "Yeah, that makes me feel warm." Until you take a step back and think about what she's saying. All she has done is the same thing she's accusing us of doing, which is saying, "You're wrong and I'm right. You don't know, I know. It's not the left side of the mountain that gets you to the top. It's the right side, it's the not the other side. It's the all sides get you to the top." She's making the same claims that she is attacking the monotheistic religions of making but blanketing it by saying, "If that works for you, you climb up that way." Which in the end is unloving. But we blanket it with tolerance, when in the end it's not tolerance. All she's saying is, "The Jews, the Muslim and the Christian are wrong in their belief system, and I'm right." That's what happening. That's what she's saying. Her and Toile, that's what they're saying, that we're wrong, the Muslims are wrong and the Jews are wrong, and that they're right. And how dare us say we are right and other people are wrong. Can you see that it's a silly loop? But that's the world we live in, and a lot of Christians listen to her, love her and believe what she says. But she's the High Priestess of Lies. So go ahead and e-mail me, and I can send you some links so you can watch to show you that I'm not lying to you.

Now, let's watch this. Let's watch how people elevate systems and people beyond what is biblical and right. Let's look at 1 Corinthians 1:10. "I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers." Now I don't know who Chloe is, but he or she is powerful, because they have people. Chloe didn't report it; Chloe's people reported it. ". . .there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power." Let me explain the argument. There were those in the church in Corinth who go "Paul is the man. . . Paul's way of doing things is the way to do things." And there's another group who goes, "No, it's Apollos. He's the one." And another group goes, "No, it's Peter. Peter's the one that knew Jesus. He walked with Him for 3 years. He, knew him, touched him, hugged him. He knows Him. Paul had a vision, Apollos never met Him. Peter's the guy." And there's this argument about which one of them was doing it the right way.

Now, let me show you the difference in style. Go to Chapter 2, starting in verse 1. "And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." So what we learn about our boy Paul here is that he's going to say, "I'm not the big intellect, I wasn't a good speaker and I was fearful and trembling." Now the thing that gives us a little bit of insight is over in 2 Corinthians when Paul is going to say that when he writes, he's aggressive and when he speaks, he's meek. In fact we've finished reading out his sermon in Athens, when he gets to the resurrection, the crowd literally gets up and leaves, outside the few who were converted that day. So the crowd kind of laughed at him and walked away. So he's saying here, "I'm not an oratory giant. People aren't going to flock to hear me communicate. I'm not the dynamic communicator there is." So, that's stylistically who he is.

In Acts 18, we read this about Apollos: "Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus." Okay, so you get Paul who says, "fear, trembling, weakness, but the Spirit saved and did mighty things." And we learn in Acts 18 that Apollos is gifted, charismatic, brilliant and fervent in Spirit. He's like the communicator. He's the one who you're like, "Oh yeah, he's speaking this weekend. Excellent." Now Paul's the, "Oh, Paul is speaking. Well alright, let's see what he got. Yeah, that's about what I remembered. Okay." Now we don't hear much about Peter. In fact, they don't mention Peter again in the rest of the 1 Corinthians passage, but we do know that Peter becomes the mouthpiece of the Apostles, despite the fact that almost every time he opens his mouth, it goes bad. But he continues to be the mouthpiece. We also know that at his first sermon, 3000 people convert. So, he's a pretty gifted cat himself, I'm guessing. And everyone loves the aggressive guy, and Peter is definitely the aggressive guy. So you've got these 3 pieces, you've got this church in Corinth that's fighting over this.

And now watch what Paul is going to say about it in 1 Corinthians 3:1. "But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? For when one says, 'I follow Paul,' and another, 'I follow Apollos,' are you not being merely human? What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building." He's saying here, that in the end, although philosophy should be looked at, contextualization should be considered, doing the right things at the right time does not equal salvation. God saves. That's the good news. And that's all we got.

We have worked really hard over the last few years to catechize our daughter. You ask my 7 year old, "What is the end to which God created the world?" And she will say, "To glorify Himself and for us to enjoy Him forever." She'll answer you correctly. Now, she doesn't believe that. She just knows that. You can walk her through, and she can tell you the 10 Commandments. We've got a little yellow book, and she can answer those things for you. She does not believe them. We went on a date night last week and she put a little dress, I put on my nice jeans and we went out to eat. At dinner, we talk about the gospel. She can answer all my questions. She gets it, she understands it but does not believe it. The Holy Spirit is going to have to ignite that kindling that we're gathering around her. So our job as parents is keep putting brush, keep putting small dry sticks, keep putting information, but we can not get her to believe. Now, you as a parent can manipulate, but you can't get to believe. That's God's business. He has got to ignite it. And what just ends up happening, as parents, is that you just pray a lot. You just keep putting stuff down that burns, and you ask the Holy Spirit to set it on fire. So that's where we are with our 7 year old, my 4 year old and my 7 month old, laying kindling and praying for God to ignite it. Maybe He'll ignite it when she's 8 or maybe He'll ignite it when she's 35. Maybe He won't ignite it, but it doesn't change the fact that the commandment on my life and my wife's wife is to lay kindling there and ask God to ignite it. So that's what we're doing. God saves.

So if you start buying into "This is the philosophy that works, this one and this one alone," you get into what I would just call silliness. You start to reduce the Scriptures. You take one story out of Scriptures and build a philosophy around it. And maybe that's okay, but in the end it's not the only way. So we need to learn to be gracious towards one another, be merciful with one another, be patient with one another, and God forbid, teach one another the Scriptures so we can see, "Oh, this isn't the only way. This isn't the way? Okay, you can do it that way, this way. The end point is this, the heart goal behind it is this," and that we might be people on mission, that we might be people that see the world and see our lives as being eternally insignificant. We should see our lives this way, our homes that way, our neighborhoods that way. Okay, let me shoot straight with you. Your kids aren't going to be professional athletes. And I know you've got him

on the creatine and on the shakes already. You've got him on all that. Listen, he's not going to be a pro-ball player. The reason your kid is playing ball right now has far more to do with what I'm teaching tonight than your kid being a superstar athlete. And, I'm speaking just in regard to percentages. Your kid is just not going to be a ball player. He's not. She's not. Now, what they are going to do is interact with a group of men and women that you wouldn't normally interact with, which according to the text, is about God putting you in a certain place for a certain reason. And that reason is that men might find Him, though He's not far from any of them. So if you can learn to see the world that way, it changes how we do evangelism. How we understand the purpose of our lives.

It will also rescue you from an unreal amount of boredom. I'm 35. The world my kids are growing up in, I couldn't have fathomed. My kids are not impressed with the iPhone or their apps. It's our phone; it's just the world they live in. There weren't cell phones when I was growing up. There weren't pagers yet. Now they came in high school, thank goodness, alright, but, they weren't around when I was Audrey's age. And you can go on and on about how there was no user manual for video games. There was a black stick and orange button. If you wanted to jump or shoot, you pressed the orange button. If you wanted to move the character, you moved the stick. There weren't 42 pages on how you play the game. There wasn't. You didn't need a degree to play a video game. You could beat your kid at games out of the pure simplicity of it. And so that's not the world we live in now. Movies came out about 3 times a month, and you went to the theater or a drive-in, and that was before you could tune in your car to hear through your speakers. You'd put this 8-inch ghetto speaker on your window, and if anyone as much sneezed, you missed out on that part of the movie. You were like, "Shut up. What did he say? What just happened? Oh great, we just missed it. Well we'll just come and see it. When does it play again? Oh tomorrow night at 7:00." And that was just kind of the world we grew up in. It's the world our kids are growing up in, and it's not the world we live in now. We are the most entertained generation the world has ever known, and we're crazy bored. Friday, some guys on staff here and I went and saw *The Book of Eli*, partly because I'm a Denzel Washington fan and in every Denzel Washington movie, he walks in slow-motion and kills someone. For some reason, I'm drawn to that and I love that.

And then there were some Biblical overtones in this one, so we were there. We matinee'd it and we loved it. Everyone wants the epic. They really do. And you know, in the movie, he's headed west, he carries a sword, there's a bible involved, there's a sword involved, there's Denzel, who's just cool. I mean, there were a couple times when he rubbed his lips, and I was like, "I don't look like that when I rub my lips." I want to be Denzel, but it's just going to happen. But that's what I want. Now there's this real desire and draw to be part of something bigger than ourselves. And here is what I want to contend with you until God calls me home, or calls you home, or until our time here is done. You've been invited into the greatest story, ever. The greatest drama, adventure, romance, you've been invited in. So what a lame substitute to fill our lives with watching other people live epics instead of living the one we've been invited in to. So may you see the world differently.

When you get out of here and go to the restaurant or watch Jack live an epic for a day that lasts 6 months, when you do that, when you leave and go to the restaurant I pray that you'd see and understand and have new lenses on for what you've been invited to and what you've been called to. And maybe you'd be able to escape the fear. You see, here's one of the things about being in the Path series. This is going to reveal self-exaltation, this is going to reveal where you're ashamed, this is going to reveal where you value what is temporary at the expense of what is eternal. This is going to show you how much you still care at how others see, perceive you and judge you. This is on the Path series because to be able to share our faith shows that we believe and understand that there really is a God and that we've been called to something bigger than ourselves. That's why we end the Path series with this, so you might see this, understand this, grasp this and walk in it. It's just a deep desire in my heart, and I'm going to end with this.

On my first Wednesday prayer night, there were 9 or 10 of us, maybe a little more than that. We got on our knees at the altar at the old Highland Village campus and thanked God that there were men and women around this area that, at that night, knew nothing about Jesus Christ, worlds were falling apart and either had animosity towards Christianity or not background in Christianity and that God was going to draw them, save them and rescue them by the gospel. And some of you here are those people. You are those people. Some of you came to know Him, not out of that prayer but because men and women have understood this and lived this. And now you're a part of it, and it continues. The United States government moved my father from the Bay area, to Galveston, Tx. At first I thought was judgment. Part of me still thinks maybe that was. But according to the text, I had a locker that I needed to be by, I had an intern I had to meet, I had a youth minister I needed to meet, I had a Sunday school teacher I needed to meet and I needed to see DC Talk at The Summit and be confused and I needed to go to youth camp and be scared. And all that was in God's plan when the U.S. government said, "Steve Chandler, Janet Chandler, pack your bags. You're going to Texas." God is still doing this. He's still doing it. Like, all the pain and suffering lately, not just in my life but in so many people's lives, and in what we're seeing in Haiti, part of me is crying out, "Just come end this! Let the Second Advent come! Come end this!" But is it not in His mercy that keeps Him from ending it now, with so many who don't know, with so many who don't know or have heard. So even Him delaying it a merciful, beautiful thing. So may you have eyes to see, ears to hear may life have a deep meaning that saves you from a 1000 trivial boredoms. May you live life intentionally and on purpose. God help us.

Let me pray. "Father, I thank You for these men and women. I thank You for the opportunity for the Word to just press on us a little bit. Where we have been impatient, and rude with one another, where we've exalted philosophy beyond theology, would You forgive us? I pray for patience with one another and I pray for a deep desire to see men and women come to know You and an understanding of what our neighborhood is, what our workplace is, and on and on and on I could go. Help us, I thank You for worship. I thank You for the opportunity to sing. So my prayer is that for the next few minutes as we sing to you, God, is that You would seal these things in our heart, that You mark them in our hearts, that You would challenge us and convict us and encourage us and that You would awaken us to the possibility of what we've heard today. I pray against any type of motivation through guilt or motivation through 'Oh, I'm going to do better this time' but more of a submission towards You that leads to live and joy in You for purpose. We love You. Help us. And it's for Your beautiful name, I pray. Amen."