



Spiritual Gifts: February 8, 2018

Verses Covered This Week

John 16:7 – 8

Matthew 13:18 – 23

Hebrews 3:15

1 Peter 1:3 – 7

Ephesians 1:13 – 14

Hebrews 7:25

Hebrews 6:4 – 6

Hebrews 6:9

1 Timothy 1:5

1 John 5:16 - 17

1 Corinthians 3:12 - 15

Alright ladies. We're going to see if you're assured of your salvation today. We're going to see if you people are going to make it to heaven. So there are obviously two theories on when you get saved. One theory is that you can't lose your salvation. I'm going to obviously be in that camp. I'm going to do my best to walk you through scripture so we can see that. Although there are scriptures that are terrifying. If you go to the book of Hebrews, we went through that last night in Wednesday night service, it has four sections. It basically says Jesus is better than angels, better than Moses, He's better than the priest, He's better than the old covenant. But in each one of those sections there's a warning passage. You'll find statements like if we go on deliberately sinning, there's no redemption for us. We'll look at Hebrews 6 today because that's generally the one I get tagged with the hardest. But they are terribly uncomfortable and I think that is obviously the design. So there are some passages that can give you the heebie-jeebies especially if Jesus is not really that important to you. And so obviously the first theory is you can't lose which is where I'm going to go from the scripture.

Second theory is you can lose and it's generally based on one of two possibilities. You've sinned so much that God takes your salvation from you. That's one theory. The other theory is that, and this is kind of where my brother-in-law is. He's a great Christian. We had a long, if you can imagine a Baptist preacher and a Harvard Christian, which is a contradiction in terms by the way, but we had a long discussion one night over this. And his take is what we've seen happen, oddly enough we've talked about it in staff, we've seen it, we've had both in our youth department and in our college ministry. We had a kid that was doing music under one of our college ministers and

he came up to him and he said, “Look I’m leaving the music.” And then he said, “As a matter of fact, I’m leaving Christianity totally.” And he left and has moved away from Christ and has never returned. So my brother-in-law’s argument, which you might argue from the scripture, is if you completely turn from Jesus and you walk away, then you lose your salvation. Now my take is going to be if you turn and walk away, you never really had it. That, for me, is the key.

So I want you to go to a couple places. We’ll look at a little bit of disturbing scripture, but we’ve got to deal with it. Go to John 16. Now I’m going to take the position, not once saved always saved, my position is once really saved, then you’re always saved. But you have to be really saved. You can’t look like you’re saved. Look at John 16:7 – 8. Listen to what he says.

⁷Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. ⁸And when He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;

Now He’s very clear. He uses the word convict and He says it will be sin, righteousness, and judgment. Now I’ve told you before this Greek word, *elegchó*, literally means to win an argument. So the Holy Spirit, no matter what a person talks about they believe, everybody believes there’s a God. There is no such thing as an Atheist. Why do we know that’s not true? Romans 1. God has put a knowledge of Him in everybody. So Atheists are a choice. They’re not a natural progression, no matter what they tell you. So what the Holy Spirit does is He brings you back to the truth; there is a God, you’re a sinner, Jesus is not, and you’re going to face judgment if you don’t let His righteousness take the place of your sin in your life. He will convict you of that. He will bring you to a place where there’s no doubt in your mind where you are.

Now here’s the problem. I want you to go to Matthew 13. The difficulty is you can ignore that. This is how you know in verse 18, this is how you know that the disciples were Baptist. Because they never understood anything Jesus said; so they were Deacon material. It says:

¹⁸“Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart.

Now that’s a terrifying statement, but what He says, Satan undoes God’s conviction. So even though God’s done this tremendous work in your life, He says when you don’t understand it, I don’t think that means intellectually. I’ve had children in my office, I had a five-year-old the other day that just wasn’t ready. I mean it was evident he wasn’t ready, but he could answer all my questions. I have a set of questions that I ask kids on Wednesday afternoons. I ask them:

- Do you know what sin is?
- Can you give me an example of sin?
- Have you sinned? Does God like your sin? Does He like you?
- If I want to get rid of my sin, what do I do?
- What did Jesus do that lets Him forgive us?

Now if they can walk through all those, then I think they have the knowledge that they need to have to be saved. So I've got a five-year-old that can walk through every one of those questions. So when He says they don't understand it, I don't think it's in an intellectual thing, I think He's referencing this. They don't understand spiritually what's happened. They don't get that they're under this conviction. They don't understand the depth of it. And then Satan comes and he removes it. This is why you have this verse in Hebrews 3:15:

¹⁵“Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts,

So that the enemy comes and actually undoes God's conviction. Now when he takes off God's conviction, now God's got to do it over again. So this doesn't come overnight. I remember the first time I experienced this. I was preaching a revival at a little church that I wound up being interim pastor at. As a matter of fact, a buddy and I, we spent six months interim pastoring. We split the services so one service he'd be the worship guy, in those days Music Director, and the next week I was the music director. I remember doing whatever people do with this and one of the guys, it was a little country church, pulled me aside and said, “You know you were doing 4/4 time.” And I said, “Listen, dude, I'm just doing time.” So Saturday night there was a young girl in the back pew that you could, I mean she was crying madly and she was gripping the front of the pew. I mean it was one of those surreal moments. She's just gripping the pew. I didn't get a chance to catch her Saturday night. She was back Sunday morning, no big deal, happy go lucky, friendly. I talked to her and said, “So I saw you last night.” She said, “Yeah, I'm fine.” Somewhere between Saturday night and Sunday morning, he undid the conviction of God in her life. Now the problem you face is, this is why I think he says, “Today if you hear His voice, harden not your heart.” When you do this, when you allow Satan to undo what God says. A conviction comes, and you go, “You know, I'm just not ready.” I think it puts a hardening on your heart that over time, then it becomes more and more difficult for you to come to Christ. I shared last night a couple things that I'll share this morning. Because of this, I don't think you have a lot of opportunities for Christ. Now obviously if this is true, right, if these two passages are true you can't be saved when you want to. You can only be saved when God talks to you. So when you ignore Him and the enemy undoes that and now there's a little bit of hardening, it's going to take God a little longer.

My parents, we grew up Southern Baptist, Tennessee, Georgia, Colorado, Louisiana, Alabama, all those states we went, until we got back to Alabama, my parents kind of dropped out of church at that point. When I grew up we went Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, “M” Night, training union, Sunday school; I heard the Gospel from the best. I heard it every Sunday. It was not until I was 17-years-old sitting at home, Friday night, listening to Billy Graham, heard nothing Billy Graham said. He made one sentence; he stated one sentence. He said “I believe Jesus is coming back within the next 100 years.” That one sentence did to me what none of the rest did. Went back in my room, asked Christ into my heart, as a matter of fact I didn't pray the perfect little Baptist prayer, I went back in and said, “Lord I'm not ready if you come back tonight. And I want you to make me ready.” But I didn't hear His voice. I didn't hear this until I was 17-year-old. So I don't think you get a ton of chances. If you remember when we were doing the children's building, this has been true every church I've been at. This is my fourth church to pastor. Every church I've been at; it's been the same thing. When I have people raise their hands and say, “Those of you saved 65 and above.” You'll have two or three hands. You go to 50; you'll have a few

more. 40. 30. When you get down to 18 and below, every church I've been at including this one, 96% of the hands go up. So you don't get a lot of shots here. So when I say once saved, always saved. I mean once really saved. You have got to come under the conviction of the Spirit. You don't get a lot of shots at that and when you kind of play with this and you go, "Yeah I don't want to do it today." He undoes it and now God has to redo it.

Now look at the next verses.

²⁰The one on whom seed was sown on rocky ground, this is the man who hears the word, he receives it with joy; ²¹yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. ²²And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

And then He talks about a fruitful soil. So you've got a guy who Satan undoes. You've got two guys who look good, but nether on of them last. And the Bible talks over and over and over about persevering being the key to salvation. So you've only got one guy out of the four soils that comes to Christ. But I simply want you to understand there are people that look like they're saved, they're real excited, there are people that look like they made the decision, but the world crowds out what they think is in there. So obviously there are people that can look like they're believers, but they're not. So a person's only really saved, which is they believe and respond in faith to the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

So if you do that, let me show you what happens. Go to 1 Peter 1:3 – 7. Now listen to what he says:

³Blessed be the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ who according to His great mercy He's caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Christ. ⁴To an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.

I love that word unfading. What it means is, I mean it's just like your clothing. You wear clothes long enough; it's going to fade. What we get with Jesus is never going to be less meaningful from the day we start to the day that it doesn't end.

kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

So he says you are guarded, and remember you've got to be legitimately saved, you are guarded by God's power. If it's His power that guards my salvation, that's what he's talking about guarding, he's talking about an inheritance kept in heaven for people who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation, I'm guarded for salvation by the power of God. Now this section of verses in and of itself to me, means you can't lose your salvation. There isn't anything bigger than the power of God. If I'm guarded for salvation, that's what he's saying, I am, by God's power, for salvation. The purpose of His power is to continue my salvation. You've got to remember, the Greek word, *σὺζῶ*, used in the New Testament is used in three forms. I was

saved, I am being saved, and I will be saved. You're not completely saved right now because you still sin. You have a body that's going to go into decay at some point. But there's coming a day when you don't sin, you get a new body, you get a new place, you get a new heaven, you get a new earth, everything is fixed. That's the shall be saved; until that occurs, you are guarded by God's power until that day. So if His power does the guarding, I'm going to have a little difficulty with you losing that.

Now look over at Ephesians 1:13 – 14. We'll give you a little Greek today. Listen to what he says. Remember we have this three-fold poem talking about God the Father's role in redemption, God the Son's, and now we come to God the Spirit. Listen to this.

¹³In Him, you also, when you heard the word of truth,

How do I hear the word of truth? You can't hear it from me, right? You hear it from the Holy Spirit. So when I hear the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, when I hear the word of truth, the Gospel; I'm a sinner, He wasn't, I face judgment unless I trade my sin for His righteousness.

and believed in Him

I have to respond with belief to this conviction. Now watch what happens.

you're sealed with the Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of His glory.

I am sealed with it and I have a down payment. This Greek word, *sphragizō*, was used for the king's signet ring, whenever he sealed a document, they would fold the document over, they would take wax, he would put his ring in the wax and put his ring on the document. And when you're carrying that document and you see that seal, the only one that has the authority to open up that seal is the one who had the signet ring. They all knew that metaphor and so when Paul writes and says we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit seals us for our inheritance. So we are sealed by God. I'm guarded by His power and I am sealed by His Spirit. Then He is a down payment. Now this word doesn't mean anything to us anymore. Super Bowl last Sunday night, God answered my prayer. The evil empire lost. The evil empire had an offensive coordinator named Josh Daniels. He made a deal to go to the Indianapolis Colts before they went into the post-season. The deal was so secure that three other coaches left their jobs, went to Indianapolis, moved their families, got there, the day after the Super Bowl Josh was driving to New England Stadium to clean out his locker and whatever happened, he called the Indianapolis Colts and said, "Nah, I'm not coming." So he didn't go. So you've got three coaches that already moved their families and if a coach comes in and he doesn't like them, they're gone. Now that's us today. We make promises we don't keep. Don't ever put God's character in comparison to us. When He makes a down payment, He puts His Holy Spirit in you as a down payment that He's going to redeem you, as a matter of fact, what does He say? A guarantee of our inheritance which is another word for salvation. So when He gives us a down payment, He seals us, and a down payment for our inheritance. What He's doing when He puts His Holy Spirit in you is He says, "Look, this is My promise. You're going to inherit the salvation I promise you." These two words are, for me, key

because they are the guarantee from God that if I possess the Spirit because I believed in the conviction then I am guarded by God's power and it is the down payment, the promise from God Himself that He's going to redeem me. With those things being true, I don't see how you lose.

Look at Hebrews 7:25. Now we've talked about Romans 8:26 – 27 where the Holy Spirit prays on our behalf when we don't know how to pray what we should. So when I don't know how to pray, the Holy Spirit takes up my slack. He prays for what I need in life. Now look in Hebrews 7:25.

²⁵Consequently He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Now what would it mean to be saved to the uttermost? The uttermost would be the as far as you can go you're able to be saved. So as far as God's going to take you in salvation, He's going to save you to that place.

When you put these two together you've got Jesus interceding for you daily with the Father. You've got the Holy Spirit in you praying for you when you don't know how to. These two things, you're going to heaven to find and to relate properly and correctly to God the Father. God the Spirit and God the Son are interceding for you in this world. If Jesus is praying for you, the Holy Spirit is praying for you, then surely you're going to make it. You don't make it based on your ability. You make it on the power of the Spirit and the intercession of Jesus Christ.

Slide over to Hebrews 6:4. Listen to what he says:

⁴It is impossible in the case of those who have once been enlightened who have tasted the heavenly gift who have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵who have tasted the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding up to contempt.

Now here's the problem here, if this does mean you can sort of lose your salvation, based on this passage, you can't get it back. If you can fall away, look at what he says,

then have fallen away, it is impossible to restore them again to repentance.

So if you do fall away, if this is legit as far as losing your salvation, and you've fallen away, you can't get resaved. So if Hebrews 6 is a reference to a person losing their salvation or walking away from it, you go back to our kid that walked away from it, if he's walked away from it, then based on this, he can never be saved. If that's what it's referencing. Now the way we know it's not referencing that I that when you go down to verse 9. Look at that he says.

⁹Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things, things that belong to salvation.

He says there are things that belong to salvation that we think are true of you and obviously these things don't belong to salvation. So if that's the case, how is it that you can taste the heavenly gift, share in the Holy Spirit, taste the goodness of the word of God, and the powers of the age to come; how do you do that? Right here. Holy Spirit comes, you taste Him, you taste the powers of the world, you taste the third person of the trinity who is invading your life convicting you, arguing you that you are a sinner, you need the righteousness of Jesus, you face His judgment, you see all the great things that can be yours. Look at what he says.

the goodness of the word of God.

Boy there's the goodness of the word of God that I'm wicked, Jesus can give me His righteousness, and I will escape the judgment of God. That is goodness of the word of God. So I think what this is talking about is John 16:7 – 8. I think we're not dealing with the believer because that's pretty clear from verse 9. What we are dealing with is the conviction of the Holy Spirit in our life which is almost being saved. The only difference is He's spoken to me, I've heard Him, but I've not responded, and He's not allowed to come in because I've said "No." So I think this is a reference to conviction. So there are passages that are difficult, but I really think from that, that is not what it's referencing.

Now look at so let me walk through this really quickly. We're not going to go there. We're only going to look at a couple things. Ephesians 4:30 says don't grieve the Holy Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 5 says don't quench the Holy Spirit. We looked at Hebrews 12 Sunday. God's discipline. When I quench the Holy Spirit, He's in me, He's there, but I don't let Him control me, I grieve Him. Now listen to me carefully. Now one other thing, we don't have time to go there, 1 Timothy 1:5 he talks about your conscience. He uses this word three or four or five times in 1 Timothy. It's a huge thing for Paul. Now your conscience and what it feels is controlled by you. You determine what your conscience feels. There is a part in you that says this is bad, this is good. If you have a real conscience, you'll hate New England and love Texas football teams, but you will never be OK with Jerry Jones. So you've got this conscience which is controlled by what you believe. If I believe this is wrong and this is right, my conscience in time will yield to that. There should be two things then if my conscience is trained well and I have the Holy Spirit in me, these two things, when I am living in an activity that God does not approve, my conscience along with the grieving of the Holy Spirit, I will sense His grief in my life. So if I sense His grief, and my conscience works together, and those are because I've quenched, what should happen? Repentance. I should say, remember I want remorse because I'm responding to the grief of the Holy Spirit. So I will repent and say, "God I am wrong. I am so sorry. So this will create repentance. When this does not, when I quench Him and I don't care about the grief, and I've not trained my conscience well, and I stay in this, then Hebrews 12 becomes operative and God disciplines my life. These two things should be enough to bring you back. However, that's not always the case. Therefore, you have 1 John 5 and we have 1 Corinthians 3:12 – 15. Look at 1 John 5:16. Now listen to this:

¹⁶If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will give him life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. ¹⁷All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.

Now what's he talking about? He's not talking about his physical brothers. What's he talking about? He's talking about his brothers in Christ. So there are things you do that don't God to take your life out. There are things you do that does cause God to take your life out. Look at 1 Corinthians 3. This is one of the more unique passages in the scripture. He's talking about our rewards in eternity. As a matter of fact, look in verse 12.

¹²Now if any man building on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³each man's work will become manifest; for the day will disclose it because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire itself will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

Now these two things kind of correlate because I think what happens is, if you don't respond to the grief, you don't respond to the discipline then at some point if you're a believer and you've not yielded to these two things, God will take you out and your reward will not be what it could have been. So I do think you can come here, we see this, remember we talked about this, 1 Corinthians, he said you had rich people and poor people at the Lord's supper. The rich people were getting drunk, they had extra food. The poor people had no wine, no food, they were starving. The rich people gave them nothing and he says, "This is why some of you sleep and some of you have died." You have Ananias and Sapphira lying about what they gave when they sold the land. Both of them die. There are times when God will, if the grief doesn't work and the discipline doesn't work, that He will take you home. Obviously these only apply to a believer. Believer doesn't have grief. His conscience is controlled by what? What's going to control his conscience and direct his conscience? His culture. What his culture believes is going to direct his conscience. This is the problem with Jen Hatmaker. Jen Hatmaker left the scripture and now the culture and its conscience is directing her life and her belief in what's true and what's not true. So these things don't work, God's discipline doesn't work, then He takes you home. At which point you go. I love what he says, as through fire. You're going to smell like you went to Hell. You got as close to the flames as you could and God took you home. So my response to this is eternal. I think this proves this and it proves once really saved, then you're always saved. So I think if you've met Christ, you've yielded to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, you're a believer, now let me tell you one other thing.

We know a couple of deaths in the New Testament, but we really don't know why and he doesn't define what that sin is in 1 John 5. Because I think it can be anything. I remember when I was first called to preach, First Baptist, Slidell, Louisiana, I've been a little bit of a rogue. I know that's hard to believe. And so it was a little bit of a shock in the church that I had made it. I remember the youth were shocked when I told them. The church wasn't really sure about that. The assumption was that I wouldn't make it. I can't tell you how many people came up to me, well meaning, and said, "Look, we know you're going to a Baptist school, but we don't think you should do that. We think you should go to Alabama and major in something just in case this doesn't work out for you." So I had a number of people give me that curious advice. And then I had one lady call me over to the house and I went over with a buddy of mine. We were sitting down and her husband had died recently in his thirties. And she said, "Do you know why my husband died?" I said, "Yeah, he had a heart attack." And she said, "No. He knew his whole life

God had called him to preach. He's known it, he knew he should have gone. We were right across from New Orleans Seminary. He refused and when the heart issues began to surface, he told me, 'God's going to take me home because I've ignored what He's called me to do.'" And so she laid that on me which was her call. I didn't make that decision, but she certainly felt that. So my position is, I don't think you can lose your salvation. I think there's too much strength in these scriptures. But I think you really have to be saved and I think you are saved and you ignore him at some point, he'll take you home. I think that's why you mean people living for a long time in the church. Because they're not believers.

Questions

Q. Not all who say to me, "Lord, Lord" will be admitted. There are people who think they are?

A. That's the point of Matthew 13. Those people that had the fiery feeling of joy, they thought they were saved. Mathew 7:22

²²Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name

That's exactly right, there are people that think they're saved, but they're not.

Q. I'm following, but I am struggling. It might just be me. Those who therefore have the sense that they are, but aren't versus those who have the sense that they are and they really are. How do you have.... So I feel on the one hand very strongly that I was called and responded and became a Christian at 14 years of age. However, Jesus said "Why do you call me Lord, Lord and not do what I say?" Again, "Not all who say to me 'Lord, Lord will be admitted on the last day.'" Between the ages of 14 and 27 I could definitively say I was never discipled, I never followed Him, honestly if you knew who I was before, I'm not sure you would have put me on this staff.

A. OK. Let me back up. You're confusing texts. OK. Your question's valid. The problem is nobody gets Matthew 7. Now that's the text you're referencing. Matthew 7's at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount is a sermon totally against the Pharisees. Because they kept saying Lord, Lord. We love you, Lord. We believe in you. But it wasn't legit because they didn't accept the Son. So you have this clear reference. That's in the context of an entire sermon against the Pharisees. Because He says, "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will not see the kingdom of Heaven." And at the end He says, "Many will say to me 'Lord, Lord.'" So the context is really that that's the attitude of the Pharisees. That's not the same as I get saved my Junior year in High School in Louisiana, we moved to Alabama. I write Billy Graham and tell him I've been saved. He sends me ten booklets that I devour. I go up in the summer. I'm devouring these books in my room. I devour them when I start going to class. But my parents quit going to church, this is no excuse, I'm just stating what happened. They quit going to church, I go, it's a dead church, it has no impact on my life. I fall away from Christ. But He brought me back when He called me to preach. I sensed the grief and my discipline was the brutality of the call He gave me. And that brought me back. It's not a matter that we don't at times have seasons where we fall away. We struggle. You have

somebody that goes through a divorce, you have a lady whose husband's been beating her, you have somebody who has an addiction. We're going to struggle with some things. There's a difference between struggling and "I'm done." And I was never there. The Pharisees said they were there, they weren't. The Scribes said they were there; they weren't. That's Jesus' statement.

Q. Thinking that maybe I wasn't really there because when I was 27 nobody spoke; I just woke up.

A. Why did you wake up? Because His grief finally overwhelmed you. You would not have awakened without this. I can quench for a while, but at some point that should awaken me.

Q. So you would argue then that that finally got to me when I was 27, but between 27 and 14, then I still was legitimately sealed?

A. Absolutely!

Comment: There could be period of stagnation as well, it doesn't necessarily mean that like, "Oh, I fell away." I just could be you were a baby Christian."

A. Absolutely. Paul writes to the Corinthians exactly what she's saying. I have some other things to say, but you haven't grown. He doesn't say they're not believers. If you read Corinth, right, you've got a guy sleeping with his stepmother, they don't believe in the resurrection of the dead, they get drunk at the Lord's supper, they're fighting over who the preacher is, they're suing each other. What's the word he uses? The very first verse in 1 Corinthians? To the saints. And he says, "I thank my God for you." What's the only book in the New Testament where Paul does not say, "I thank my God for you." Galatians. Why? Because they have stepped away from Jesus. The Corinthians were struggling in morals because of all sorts of issues. But they were believers. The Galatians had moved away from that, back to a non-belief position; maybe because several of them weren't saved. So that's the distinction. It doesn't mean we're not going to fall away. Hebrews 6 talks about falling away. That's a Baptist term, but the Bible term is that you fall away from being convicted. Hebrews 6 would go back to Matthew 13. The fact that you came back is because this overwhelmed you at some point. You say, "You woke up." That was because this got you. The grief finally hit. When you say 14 – 27, I don't think you judge a believer until they're 33. You certainly don't judge your kids until they get in their mid-thirties. Because your kids are nuts.

Q. So going with her question, so also then how do you know because you'll see a bunch of young kids go up to the church and, he's been saved, he asked Jesus in to his heart, how does a kid know if they were saved at such a young age. After they've grown up, how do they know if they were ready?

A. That is such a good question. How does a kid know? One of the things I try to do with parents is I tell parents to put their kid off. Now I have parents that get freaky. The first thing the kid does I want to ask Jesus. "Let's go down and talk to the pastor." I mean it's

like they're scared to death. I tell parents to put that kid off until the kid is driving them crazy. Because to me that's when a kid's hearing from the Holy Spirit rather than parental faith. I do believe if a parent were to make a mistake, I think God still honors the kid because at some point, the kid wants, when Jesus said come as a child, it's because the kid believes, they just are stupid enough to think this is true.

Q. What if someone was saved in their church and they didn't ask the children the questions to make sure they were ready.

A. That's the struggle. I got saved when I was 9. Got baptized, met with the preacher, he didn't even pray with me at the front. Just went down, we came home, my parents didn't talk to me about it. I don't even know what I was thinking. But I come home and my parents said, "Well, now we're all believers." I obviously was not a Christian. So there's nothing you can do, unfortunately, with some situations except I do believe that a parent who is well meaning, but stupid, that God will honor that child. And He will protect that child and hold him until He gets him to where he needs to be. I think the main thing, especially if you go back to Ephesians 1. It talks about hearing the Spirit, John 16, as long as that child hears that Spirit, it doesn't really matter what the parents do. He can respond to that. And the main thing is not what the parents say, but hearing the gospel of his salvation. If he hears the truth somewhere, then the Holy Spirit can reach him regardless of where the parents are. But that is a tough thing. I think as a parent you want to give them the truth, the basic truth about salvation, and you want to tell them, "We're not going to do this until you feel like God's speaking to you." And they'll say, "Well how will I know that?" And my response is always, "You will know." So I think you do that and I think, like we have a ton of kids who come whose parents don't come. And I'm sure there's a wrestling through that and some parents don't like it when their kid says he wants to be a believer. Even when he's 10, 11, 12, a lot of parents say, "Well he doesn't have the wherewithal to make that decision." But I think he can and so I think ultimately the Holy Spirit sometimes countermands our failures.

Q. You know, Chris, I think that this was a very true story in our family. I really believe with all my heart when Jesus said, "Come to me, little children." I don't care if you're 99 years old or if you're 4 years old. If that is really, if God lays that on your heart, that conviction's not going away. Our oldest son accepted Christ at four. Glenn did not believe that. Fast forward 40 years later and Chad finds out his dad did not believe that, and he called his dad and he said, "Dad, how could you question?"

A. Yeah, I think no question. Once the Holy Spirit speaks, but I wouldn't let a four-year-old come in. I mean I wouldn't. If they come to me and say, "Therefore I'm going." You're going to have to go home and y'all wrestle with this. I still struggle, and it's probably because of me, I mean I grew up in a church, I did the thing at 9, but it wasn't legit, so I struggle with child salvation. It's pretty difficult. And that's why I do the survival kit. It's six weeks, they do five nights a week, it's not extensive, but every night they have something to do. And I make my kids go through that as one other step to try to make sure that the decision was legit. It's a tough thing, but I do believe, and I think Cheryl's right, I think if a child responds to the Holy Spirit, then nothing else matters.

Q. You've also said in that book that they put their prayer to Jesus. You told us that there will be a time that they begin to doubt their salvation and so they'll be able to go back to that timeframe.

A. She's exactly right. There's a blank page at the front of the Survival Kit and I make them go home with the parents, that's why I want the kid coming to Christ with their parents, not with us. Make them write that prayer down, dated it, we laminate it, and have them put it in a safety deposit box. Because you're right. The kid gets saved at nine, at 16 or 17 the enemy's going to say, "Oh, come on, man." I want him to be able to pull it out and say I did pray the right thing, I did do the right thing, I'm good to go. So it's a hook for their faith.