

QUESTION & ANSWER SERMON - PART 1

Peter Foxwell. The Cornerstone Church. August 9, 2026.

Dismiss the Middle School

STUDY GUIDE

As you came in this morning, you should have received a bulletin. Inside, you'll find a simple study guide you can use in a few different ways: to follow along with today's teaching, to reflect on during your personal devotions this week, or to spark conversation in your small group.

More resources are available online. The link is in your study guide.

Let's get started on today's teaching ...

THANK YOU

It's the date set for a Question and Answer sermon. I'm very excited to dive in, but before we get started, I need to say something:

Thank you so much for submitting your questions. There were so many excellent questions and issues to explore that I've had to make this a two-part sermon. So, if I don't answer your question this week, come back next Sunday.

You're like the noble Bereans in Acts 17:11 who ***“received the word with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.”***

OK. Let's dive into Question One.

QUESTION ONE

Question: Is common law marriage OK with God?

Answer: No, not really.

The Christian perspective on marriage is based on four biblical insights:

1. Marriage is God's idea, not a social construct. He decides what marriage is.

Genesis 2:18 (CSB) Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him."

2. Marriage requires some intentionality and public acknowledgment. Today, we accomplish this by inviting family and friends to witness the ceremony.

Genesis 2:24 (CSB) This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.

3. Marriage is covenantal. Today, the covenant is sealed by vows and rings. A covenant binds husband and wife together even when life gets hard, we change, or we do not do our part.

Malachi 2:14 (CSB) She was your marriage partner and your wife by covenant.

4. Finally, a covenant marriage points to Christ's committed, sacrificial, saving love for his bride, the church. It's an enduring witness to the world, pointing to Jesus. I suggest that living together desecrates that sacred purpose.

Ephesians 5:31-32 (CSB) For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. 32 This mystery is profound, but I am talking about Christ and the church.

Living together outside of covenant marriage does not fit this biblical pattern. It's not adequately intentional, public, or covenantal. Therefore, it does not represent Christ's committed covenant love for his church.

So, it's not ideal. It's not what God wants for us. It does not promote human flourishing the way God intends.

So, if you're living together, but not in a covenant marriage sealed by solemn vows, why not come and talk to me about sealing your relationship before God and witnesses?

Choose to do life God's way.

Factoid

The State of Michigan has not recognized common law marriage since 1957.

QUESTION TWO

Question: Can a Christian lose their salvation?

Answer: No, BUT it's one thing to profess Christ, another to possess him. There are three kinds of people who "profess" to be Christians.

1. **There are temporary Christians.** They start out with Jesus, but various situations lead them to fall away from faith, maybe not verbally, but certainly by their godless lifestyle. Jesus taught about this in the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13. The Book of Hebrews warns us:

Hebrews 3:12 (CSB) Watch out, brothers and sisters, so that there won't be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

2. **There are counterfeit Christians.** They are using religion for some kind of personal agenda, such as money, power, sex, or whatever. One example is the false teachers in the Ephesian church:

2 Timothy 3:6-8 (CSB) For among them are those who worm (sneak in under false pretenses) their way into households and deceive gullible women ... these (false teachers) also resist the truth. They are men who are corrupt in mind and worthless in regard to the faith.

Now, to be blunt, temporary and counterfeit Christians were never actually Christians (never actually born again by God's Spirit), and so they were never saved in the first place, so they can't lose what they never had.

3. **The third kind of people are genuine Christians.** The Bible teaches us that genuine Christians have truly turned from themselves and their sins, sincerely

trusted in Jesus as God and Savior for forgiveness and life with God, and have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. God has made an unbreakable salvation covenant with them, ratified it in the atoning blood of Jesus, and sealed them with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of final salvation.

So, to be clear, a genuine Christian is not necessarily someone who says they're a Christian but shows no evidence of God's life in them.

The Bible assures us that genuine Christians will persevere in faith until the end, will receive final salvation from God's judgment, and will enter the eternal Kingdom of God.

Why? Because God will keep them in faith by his power, promises, and various means until the end. For example:

1 Peter 1:5 (CSB) You are being guarded by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Ephesians 1:13-14 (CSB) In him you also were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed. 14 The Holy Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of the possession, to the praise of his glory.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 (CSB) Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely. And may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you is faithful; he will do it.

This does not mean that genuine Christians live perfect lives without temptations, doubts, or sins. But God promises that he will keep us from fatally or finally falling away. So, genuine Christians will not lose their salvation.

QUESTION THREE

Outsiders and former “Christians” who are deconstructing their faith note that Christians seem to have the same struggles as non-Christians - sins, brokenness, hurts. We look a lot like the world. Where is the abundant life Jesus promised?

I’m going to answer this question in two parts. Part 1: What is the abundant life? Part 2: What does the normal Christian life look like?

1. WHAT IS THE ABUNDANT LIFE JESUS PROMISED?

In John 10:10, Jesus claimed that he is the source of abundant life. Context matters here, so let’s read the before and after verses:

John 10:9-11 (CSB) 9 I am the gate (to the sheep pen). If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. 10 A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance. 11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Without going into depth, Jesus was claiming three things:

1. The religious leaders who opposed Jesus came to kill, steal, and destroy God’s flock (his people). They were bad shepherds because their false teachings and practices led people away from God and eternal life.
2. Jesus was the good shepherd who protected and provided for his flock by leading them into life with God through his sacrificial death. This is life in abundance - the Greek word means the ultimate form of life.
3. Jesus was God; God is the Good Shepherd of the Bible.

So, to sum up, the abundant life is found only in Jesus, and it is life with and from God, spiritual or eternal life. At its core, it is knowing God and Jesus Christ (John 17:3). Abundance is knowing God.

Jesus wasn't talking about worldly ideas of abundance such as a successful life, a wealthy and healthy life, or even a happy life. He was talking primarily about knowing God through faith in Jesus Christ.

There is no secular equivalent to that. So, on that basis alone, Christians are not the same as other people, whether it looks like it or not.

2. WHAT IS THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE?

The critic might say something like this: If you Christians have this spiritual life, why are you so messed up? Why do you live just like everyone else?

Good question. I have three responses:

A. Research on people who profess Christ and read their Bibles multiple times weekly shows that they are different than their neighbors.

Arizona Christian University's 2024 American Worldview Inventory found evangelicals are far more likely than the norm to reject lying, stealing, and extramarital sex.

The American Bible Society's State of the Bible 2025 research suggests that Bible-reading Christians are significantly more generous than other groups.

B. The normal Christian life is a bit bipolar. We should not pretend otherwise. The Bible is clear: We're blessed, and we're broken. We're godly,

and we're ghastly. We're victorious, and we're embarrassing. We make progress, and we have setbacks.

That's reality for every believer. Life in Christ is a struggle. The Bible doesn't sugarcoat the cause of it:

Galatians 5:17 (CSB) 17 For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want.

This does not excuse our sins and failures, but it does explain them.

C. We admit that we're messed up and we need a forgiveness and restoration to God that we cannot achieve. So, we've turned to Jesus for the spiritual life only he can give us.

1 John 1:9 - 2:2 (CSB Strong's) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say, "We have not sinned," we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. 2:1 My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father — Jesus Christ the righteous one. 2 He himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.

So, my answer to the critics is this: You need Jesus. Desperately. Not because he's the path to success, health, wealth, or happiness. But because you need eternal life, life with and from God, and Jesus is the only source.

Only Jesus. Where else can you go?

LIGHTNING ROUND

Question 1: My genome contains traces of Neanderthal DNA. What are Neanderthals and how do they fit into the creation account?

Answer: We can't be certain what Neanderthals were. There are two main options proposed by scholars:

- They are fully human descendants of Noah.
- They are biologically similar to humans but not physically descended from Adam or Noah, and they lack the image of God.

The most honest answer is we don't know. The Bible appears to be silent on this matter.

Genesis 1-12 is focused on three issues: **Creation** by God of everything out of nothing, **corruption** of humanity and the earth because of Adam's rebellion, and restoration to God through **covenant** promises.

I don't think the Bible is interested in some of these other issues.

Question 2: When we pray, do we have to include the phrase, “In Jesus’ name” in the prayer?

Answer: No.

Use of the phrase is based on Jesus’ teachings on prayer, such as in John 14:

John 14:13-14 (CSB) Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

Jesus was talking about his ascension to and intercession in heaven. His point was that we have access to God only because of Jesus - in Jesus’ name. And we are to use that access to pray like Jesus for what will glorify God.

His point was **NOT** to give us a magic formula for answered prayer: “Say ‘in Jesus’ name,’ and it will be done automatically.”

There is some evidence of Christians calling on Christ’s name in the 2nd century, but the earliest liturgies mostly used the phrase, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

The practice of ending prayers “in Jesus’ name” is first documented around 1840, and did not become widespread until the 18th and 19th centuries.

Question 3: Is praying a prayer written by someone else, or listening to someone else pray, really prayer?

Answer: Yes.

- The Book of Psalms contains 150 prayers written by someone else. God's people have been praying the Psalms for millennia. Jesus prayed the Psalms.
- Jesus taught his disciples a template for prayer (Matthew 6:9-13), and Christians have been praying his Lord's Prayer for 2,000 years. This prayer parallels the structure and words of first-century Jewish prayers, such as the Kadish and the Eighteen Benedictions. So, it shows that Jesus participated in the daily synagogue liturgies (Luke 4:16) "as was his custom."
- Jesus prayed the Psalms from the cross (Matthew 27:46; Luke 23:46).
- The earliest Christians were Jews who devoted themselves to "the prayers" (Acts 2:42) - the psalms and other prayers recited in the synagogue.
- Acts 4:24 records a corporate prayer meeting, which means that, while one person prayed, others listened and engaged in their minds and hearts.
- Anglicans have been using written prayers contained in the Book of Common Prayer since 1549.

The key thing is this: we must engage with written prayers with our minds and hearts, and with faith, in the same way that we engage in our own prayers. We must not recite them without thinking or believing, but we must make them our own.

Question 4: Could there be another Great Awakening in America and would secular forces suppress it?

The first Great Awakening happened in Colonial New England between 1734 and 1743. There were two key leaders: Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield. Roughly 80% of the colonists heard Whitefield's powerful preaching.

Anywhere between 25,000 and 50,000 were converted in a population of 340,000. That's why it's called the GREAT Awakening.

Answer: Yes, we could experience another Great Awakening, and no, secular forces would not be able to suppress it.

Why and why not?

Because awakenings are a sovereign work of God. And God's purposes cannot be thwarted.

- China is experiencing a great awakening; the churches are growing, and the government is pushing back. But it's failed to stop the large numbers of conversions and people joining the church.
- Africa is in the midst of a great awakening, and nothing is able to stop it, not even radical Islam.

Jesus will build his church, and hell won't hold him back.

OK. That's enough for today. Come back next Sunday for part 2.