

## Right & Wrong Bottles

1 Peter 1:22–1:25

Jeremy Cagle, July 23, 2017

Let me pray with us and we'll begin our time in the Word this morning, okay? Father, we do thank you, Lord, for Your grace and Your church, as we sang about this morning. We thank you for Christ, and we pray that this time would lift Him up and glorify Him. And we pray this all in His name, amen.

If you would, turn with me in your Bibles to the book of 1 Peter. And as you're doing that, we are in a series called "The Suffering Church," where we're talking about how the church handles pain and suffering. We've had some guest preachers these past couple weeks and I think you guys have been spoiled rotten. They did a great job, heard wonderful things from them, and we're back in the series we started some time ago on "The Suffering Church."

And as you're turning to 1 Peter, I want to start our time off with a question: What is a Christian? You ever wondered that? What is a Christian? If you could boil it all down, if you could summarize what it means to walk with Christ, and follow Christ, and know Christ as your Lord and Saviour, what would you say? To ask this another way: What does a Christian look like? If you could paint a picture of a Christian, what would you paint? If you could draw a description of one, what would you draw? Do they all have brown hair and blue eyes? Do they all drive Chevy trucks and live on Promontory Drive? Do they all talk alike, and look alike, and dress... What does a Christian look like?

Several years ago, George Barna conducted a survey on competing worldviews in the church, on competing philosophies that Christians hold to, and he said this. He said, "We live in a world of competing ideas and worldviews, but just how much have other worldviews crept into the church?" Barna's research shows that only 17% of Christians who attend church regularly have a Biblical worldview. He said, "Instead, 61% believe in New Age theology or the idea that everyone prays to the same god. 54% have post-modern views or the idea that there is no absolute truth; truth is subjective to the individual. 36% have Marxist views, and believe private property is evil, and it's the government job to fix problems in our society. And 29% believe in secularism, or the idea that miracles do not happen." In other words, according to Barna's research, nobody knows what a Christian is anymore. No one can paint a picture of one. You can be a Christian and believe that truth is subjective, and you can be a Christian and believe everyone prays to the same god. You can be a Christian and believe miracles don't exist, and you can be a Christian and believe private property is evil. You can be a Christian and believe anything nowadays.

Now, several years ago, I was fishing with a guy from Tennessee. If you ever want an interesting experience, I recommend going fishing with a guy from Tennessee. And we were going to pick up our bait, and head to the lake. And it's the best place to talk theology, when you got worms sitting next to you in the truck, and you're munching on a biscuit. And he heard I was in seminary, so he wanted to talk about the Lord with me. And he said he was reading in Genesis, where it says Adam and Eve fell after eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

And he noticed that Satan, or the serpent, was in the tree. And he also noticed that Revelation calls Jesus, "The Tree of Life." He concluded that Satan was in Jesus; the devil was in the Son of God. And then he turned to me, and he said, "That's pretty crazy, isn't it?" I said, "Yes, that's pretty crazy." I was about to say, "That's insane. You just made that up." But he went on to talk about something else. But the point is, a lot of people approach God that way. You could just make something up and be a Christian. You can say crazy things, silly things, things that don't make sense, and you're fine. There are Pantheists who believe "It'll all just pan out in the end, no matter what I say, no matter what I believe." Or there are Tinkerbell theologians who just clap their hands, and think happy thoughts, and go to a magical place called heaven.

Can I just tell you, this morning, the Bible does not say that about Christianity? The Bible does not say, "You can believe whatever you want and go to heaven." Just a few passages on this (and this is all leading to 1 Peter), in John 14, verse 6, Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me." He didn't say, "I am a way, a truth, and a life." He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." That's a definite article. There is only one way, one truth, one life. 1 John 5:12 says, "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son does not have life." That's pretty simple. If you have Christ, as we sang about, you have life. If not, you don't. 1 Timothy 2:5 says, "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." You see the word "one" repeated in that verse. The word "mediator" means "middle man". Paul says, "There's only one middle man between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." There's not many mediators.

And I say this, because I think a lot of people in our day don't understand this. They think like my friend who said crazy things, or they think like the Hindus who say God is like an elephant. You guys ever heard this before? "And religion is like a bunch of blind men grasping at the elephant." Have you heard this? "And one blind man comes up to the ear, and he says, 'I found a fan,' and another one grabs at the leg, and says, 'I found a tree,' and another one grabs the trunk, and says, 'I found a pipe.'" A lot of Christians think God is like that. And you know what? Maybe that would be true, if the elephant didn't talk. But if the elephant talked and said, "I'm an elephant," I think we should listen to him. And if God has revealed Himself in Scripture, I think we should listen to what He says, and He says, "There are not many ways to God; there's only one way."

Let me say it this way, with an illustration I've been using. My wife saw me pull these out on the way to church and she said, "You're not doing that again, are you?" It's encouraging to think I'm probably wearing you guys out with this illustration, but I have a bottle of clean and dirty water up here on stage with me. And I'm guessing that none of you would say, "It doesn't matter which one you drink from, as long as you're sincere." Anybody say that? We have several doctors in this room. Would any of you doctors, when someone comes to you and says, "I got a stomach-ache," say, "It doesn't matter which pill you take, as long as you believe it with all your heart, it'll make you better." In the same way, God doesn't say, "It doesn't matter what you put into your soul." God doesn't say, "It doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you're sincere." You have to believe the right thing, in order go to heaven. You have to believe in the right man, Jesus Christ, to be saved.

And that brings us to the Book of 1 Peter. 1 Peter is all about Jesus Christ. I think it's great we just sang about that this morning. The name "Jesus" or "Christ" is mentioned eight times in the first chapter of this book. It's mentioned about 20 times throughout the entire letter. This book is all about going to heaven through Christ. It's all about being saved through Him.

Another way to say this is: This book was written to Christians in a trial who were suffering. Verse 1 starts out, it says, "Peter, an apostle of Christ Jesus, to those who reside as aliens scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." Peter says, "These people were aliens and they were scattered." In other words, they were suffering. The word "scattered" is *diaspora* in Greek. It refers to the time when the Babylonians and Persians took over the ancient world and dispersed the people. They scattered them everywhere. And they took over Rome, and they scattered the Romans to Egypt. They took over Egypt and they scattered the Egyptians to Rome. These people were just thrown to the four corners of the winds. And Peter says, "The way out of that is to take the proper medicine." He says, "The way out of this is to drink from the right bottle. You must believe the truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

Verse 3, it says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Peter says that, "You need a living hope. When all else around you seems dead, you need something that is alive, and that thing is Christ. He's been resurrected from the dead, so that you will be resurrected from the dead in your trials."

In verse 7 it says, "So that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold, which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Christ." Same idea here, in your trials, you want to praise and glory and honour Christ.

And skipping down a little bit, let me just read a big chunk here to you. In verses 17-21 it says,

17 If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. 20 For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you 21 who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Peter says, "You were bought with the precious blood of Christ." To say this in our illustration this morning, "You were bought with medicine that looks like this. It was clean." I told you last time, Jesus' blood was precious, because it was rare. There was only one kind of blood in the universe like this, because He was sinless. He was perfect in every way, where you and I lusted, and cheated, and stole, He did none of that. Where you and I hated, and slandered, and gossiped, He did none of that. Therefore, He earned His way into heaven. He deserved an eternal reward. He had a clean bottle. And with that precious life and blood, He bought you. He paid the price for your sins. He swallowed this to give you this. He swallowed ... He took on Himself the

punishment of this to give you this. And you get through trials when you remember that. You get through suffering when you remember that. You don't get through trials ... I've heard it said this way, "Nobody asks for a book from Nietzsche to read in the hospital when they're dying." Anybody ever heard of that before? Oh, you have, Barry? Okay, well, go talk to Barry. Barry's heard about that. But it's very rare. What hope is there in saying that, "There is nothing to look forward to when you die?" And there is none. You don't get through trials by believing that miracles don't exist. How many of you would be encouraged by believing miracles don't exist, when you're dying and in the hospital? You get hope from drinking from the right bottle. And this is what we're talking about here in 1 Peter this morning.

Maybe say this, there's one more story. The first physician to die of AIDS in the United Kingdom was a young Christian doctor who contracted the disease while doing research in Zimbabwe. And in the last days of his life, he couldn't talk, but he could only write the letter J. He would just write that on a piece of paper, over, and over, and over again. It's all he had the strength to do. And his wife didn't know what he meant by that. She thought he was referring to some kind of a medicine or some kind of cure for the disease. And she would go through all the different remedies she could think of, and just repeat 'em out loud, and he just kept shaking his head, "No, no, that's not what I'm talking about." Finally it hit her, she said, "Are you talking about Jesus?" And he said, "Yes." Or he nodded his head, "Yes." That was the only hope he had in dying. You see, Christians believe that. Our only hope in dying is Jesus Christ. Our only hope in a trial is Him.

And Peter goes on to tell us what this looks like in verses 22-25. If you're a Christian this morning and you have this hope, what does it look like? What are you going to do? If you drink from the proper bottle, how does it change you?

Well, it leads us to our passage for this morning, if you're taking notes, and in 1 Peter 1:22-25, Peter says you can identify a Christian several different ways. You can identify a Christian several different ways and the first way is this: you can identify a Christian by their love for the brethren. You can identify a Christian by their love for the brethren. Christians love their brothers. They love the family of God. The Van Der Grefts, not to put you guys on the spot, you're a great example of this. You come back in town, you couldn't stay away from church, could you? You just love being here. That's an example of what we're talking about. God loves us, and in turn, we love others.

And you see this in verse 22, if you would read that with me. Peter says this, he says, "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart." He says the same thing two different ways here, but he starts off with, "Since you obey the truth," or, "the truth that I have told you so far." So, "Since you believe that you have a living hope and redemption, since you believe that you have been saved by the precious blood of Christ, since you believe that," Peter says, "and obey it, fervently love one another, from the heart." There are two modifiers for the word "love" here. If you notice, in your passage, the first is "fervently", which, in Greek, means to bend a bow. And the idea is, that the further back you bend it, the farther it travels, the more effective it is. And the farther back you've bent love, or the harder you work at it, the more effective it is. So, "fervently loves one another," passionately do it. Then he says, "from the heart." It's another way of saying,

"sincerely". "Love one another sincerely, from the heart." Do not do this with hypocrisy. Do not do this to put on a show. You don't love people for what they can give you. You don't stack chairs in the church or serve coffee, whatever you're doing, so people will pat you on the back, and if you don't get the pat on the back, you go home, and say, "Boy, everybody's ungrateful." It's not why you do this. You don't love people for how they make you feel; you do it for their sake. In 2016, World Magazine did an article on what they called "Barbie Saviours". And what they meant by that is, they were referring to people who go to third world countries, and take pictures of themselves, and then blog about how it makes them feel. And they called them "Barbie Saviours", because they said, "That's just plastic, it doesn't help anybody." It says, "It's not about the people in those countries, it's about me." Peter says, "You don't love that way. You love people from the heart." Specifically, he mentions in verse 22, "loving the brethren," which is another way of saying, "love the church." Christians love the church. We love being with the people of God.

A young man was talking to a friend and he said that he grew up with a drug problem. His mother drug him to church. Anybody relate to that? Anybody else have a drug problem growing up? He said, "My mom drug me to church on Sundays, she drug me to church on Wednesdays, drug me to church on the holidays." You see, Christians don't talk that way. We don't have a drug problem. You don't have to drag us in here. We want to be here. I was talking with someone the other day about Grace Fellowship Church, who said, "I can't wait for Sundays to roll around. I can't wait to be here. I need this fellowship. I need the love of these people." Christians think that way. A lot of folks say, "There's a lot hypocrisy in the church," but let me tell you something, there's a lot of sincerity in the church too. And if you want to find the people of God, you go to where they meet. You go to the church. I've talked with other people who said, "I wait for this all week long. All week, I'm out in the world. All week, I'm out in the dark places, Monday through Friday. But on this day, I get to come into the light and the people of the light. I can't wait for Sundays to roll around." And I experienced that these past two weeks, I missed you guys. Nothing makes you miss Chilliwack like Los Angeles.

Just kidding. Driving down the 405, like, "Man, these cars ... " Yeah. The traffic is beautiful this time of year (just so you know) in Los Angeles.

But I missed you guys. I couldn't wait to be here, see how you're doing, see what you're learning. That's the attitude ... Believers talk that way. We love being together. D. L. Moody said, "There's no use doing church work without love." He said, "A doctor can be a doctor without love and a lawyer can be a lawyer without love, but a Christian cannot be a Christian without love." He's right. You cannot be a Christian without love. Love is the glue that holds this thing together. It's the fuel that keeps the engine running. Amy Carmichael said, "A lack of love is as dangerous as cancer. It may kill slowly, but it always kills. Let us fear it. Let us give no room to this deadly cobra." He said, "If a lack of love be spotted anywhere, let us stop everything and repent of it right away." One of the Puritans says, "Satan's plans for killing the church is simple: just start with killing Christian's love for one another." Kill that and you kill the whole thing; lose that and you lose everything. Jesus said, "By this, all men will know that you're my disciples, if you have love for one another." John the Apostle said, "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he's a liar, and the truth is not in him." But you get the idea. This is how you tell who we are. You don't tell by what we wear or the colour of our eyes. You don't tell that we're Christian

by what country we come from, or what kind of car we drive, or where we live. You tell a Christian by his love.

It was said that, as the Apostle John was dying, they would bring him into the church, and he would say, "Dear children, love one another." That's all he could say and he would sit down. The last couple of years of his life, that's what he would do. He would come in every week and say, "Dear children, love one another," and then he would sit down. And someone else would do the sermon, or whatever. And finally, one of his disciples said, "John, why are you doing that? Why do you say that every week, 'Dear children, love one another?'" And he said, "Because if you get that, you get everything." This is what Peter is saying here: this is true religion. This is what it's all about.

By the way, false religions, we were talking about false religions a moment ago, they don't get this. And if you study other religions, especially those in some parts of the world, you'll see, they just hate each other. They imprison one another, they beat each other, they blow each other up, all in the name of god. Let me tell you, that's not true religion. This is why you can't just pick whichever bottle you want to drink from. And people who preach hate do not come from God. God's not into that. He's into love.

Which leads me to ask, do you love people? Do you have a concern for the brethren? Is it from the heart? Is it fervent? Do you have a drug problem? Do people have to drag you into church every week? If so, you need to be concerned. Listen, friends, as we go through the membership process and talk about what we want to be and how we want to get there as a church, as we go through the church covenant, and bylaws, and you're reading through all that, as you're filling out the paperwork, that's important, but you can't have a church without that, but you can't have a church without this either. This is huge. And this is everything.

And it leads to the next way to identify a Christian. Another way you can identify a Christian is by their new birth. You identify them by their love for the brethren, and you identify a Christian by his new birth. Christians are born again. We're not the same old people. I think I've told you before, but you guys have heard of a born-again Christian. Can I tell you that's like saying a small shrimp? If you're a Christian, you're born again. If you're born again, you're a Christian; the two words mean the same thing. To tie this into what Peter has just said in verse 22, "We have new relationships and new love for the brethren, because we are a new people." Some of you know this. When you got saved, the scales came off your eyes, and all of a sudden, you realized how important the church is, didn't you? How important the people are. That's what Peter says in verses 22-23, he says, "Since you have an obedience to the truth, purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, ... for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God."

We don't know why Peter brings up love in this passage. It could be that these people were not loving each other. It could be that the people in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia were fighting, and so he talks about love to calm them down. We don't know, but whatever the case, if you notice, he starts verse 23 off with the word "for" or "because". In other words, "This is why you love each other, because you have been born again. This is why you have different

relationships now, in the kingdom of God, for God has made you different." He says, "You've been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable." Earlier, in verse 18, he says, "You were redeemed not with perishable things like silver and gold." Now, he says, "You've been born again not with perishable seed but imperishable," it's the same idea. The idea is that this is eternal. Eternal life is eternal, do you guys get that? If you have eternal life in you, it never goes away. It can't.

Tying this to love, if you're a Christian, you love people and you keep loving them. Your love doesn't die for them. You go to church and keep going to church, same idea. I read this quote to our men at the leadership meeting several weeks ago on Wednesday night, but Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote about a man who thought this way in his church, and this is long, but I think it's very helpful. He says,

In the church where I ministered in South Wales, I used to stand at the main door of the church at the close of the service on Sunday night and shake hands with people as they went out. The incidence which I'm referring concerns a man who used to come to our service every Sunday night. He was a tradesman, but also a heavy drinker. He got drunk regularly every Saturday night, but was also in our church regularly every Sunday night. On the particular night to which I'm referring, I happened to notice while preaching, that this man was being affected. I could see that he was weeping copiously and I was anxious to know what was happening to him. At the end of the service, I went out and stood at the door. And after a while, I saw this man coming, and immediately, I was in a real mental conflict. Should I, in view of what I had seen, say a word to him, and ask him to make his decision that night, or should I not? Would I be interfering with the Holy Spirit, if I did so?

Hurriedly, I decided that I would not ask him to stay behind, so I just greeted him as usual and he went out. His face revealed he had been crying copiously and he could scarcely look at me. The following night, on Monday night, I was walking to the prayer meeting in the church and going over a railway bridge. I saw this man coming to meet me. He came across the road to me and he said, "You know, Doctor, if you had asked me to stay behind last night, I would've done so." "Well", I said, "I'm asking you now. Come with me now." "Oh, no", he replied, "But if you had asked me last night, I would have done so." "My dear friend", I said, "If what happened to you last night does not last for 24 hours, I'm not interested in it. If you're not as ready to come with me now, as you were last night, you have not got the right thing, the true thing. Whatever affected you last night was only temporary and passing. You still do not see your real need for Christ."

Can any of you identify with that? Do you know someone or do you yourself say, "My Christianity didn't last 24 hours. I got real worked up in a meeting, and then, the next day, it was all gone." If that's the case, Peter says here, "You don't have the real thing. You don't see your need for Christ." The real thing lasts. Eternal life is eternal.

You can say it this way: We have a lot of babies in our church here. I don't mean that metaphorically. I mean that seriously - we have a lot of babies. That's a bad joke, I guess, okay. I think we had ten babies a week. And if you asked one of those babies, "Would you like to be

unborn?" they would say, "No, I like being alive very much." But even if they said, "Yes", there's nothing they could do about it. They're born, that's it. It's the same way with Christians. When you were born again, that's it. You can't un-birth yourself, you can't undo salvation. You may struggle with sin, you may fail and mess up 100 times, but when it's over, you will still be saved. You will still come back to God, because you are His child. He birthed you. You belong to Him. A friend of mine said it this way, he said, "You can hold your breath for three minutes and still be alive, but if you hold your breath for three hours, you're dead." And in a similar way, you can sin for three minutes, and still be alive, but if you sin for three hours, three years, three decades, and never repent of it, you are dead; there's no life in you. This is what Peter is saying here.

Maybe one more way to look at this is: trials can't kill your hope. Suffering can't kill your salvation. A trip to the hospital can't kill it. A trip to the funeral home can't kill it. A bad day at the airport can't kill it. It's imperishable.

And this all leads to one more way to identify a Christian. You identify him by his love for the brethren. You identify him by his new birth. One more way to identify a believer, is you identify him by his love for the Word of God. It all goes back to this: Christians love the Word of God. It was said that when David Livingstone went to Africa, he went in with 73 books that weighed a total of 180 pounds. And as he went further and further into the interior, he had to shed every one of them, but the Bible. And when someone asked him, "Why?" He said, "Because this is the most important book of all." You see, Christians think that way. If you read on in verses 23-25, he says,

For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is through the living and enduring word of God. For, "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the Word of the Lord endures forever." And this is the word which was preached to you.

Peter says, "You have been born again through the living and enduring Word of God. And your new life is eternal, because it was birthed from the Word of God, which is eternal." Then he quotes Isaiah 40 to point out that where the things of this world wither, flowers and grass, the Bible, the Word of God, does not; it endures forever. I think it was Voltaire, the famous atheist, who said, "Christianity will be dead within a couple decades after my lifetime." And after he died, a Bible society bought his house and printed Bibles out of his house. See, the Word of God lasts forever. When you and I are dead and gone, it'll still be around. 100 years, 200 years from now, maybe people will stop speaking English. You know what they're gonna do? They'll translate it into another language and they'll preach it in that language.

Going back to our bottle illustration, if you build your life around this, it will stay clean. If I shook this up, it'll stay clean. Why? Because it has clean water inside of it. It's clean on the inside. And in the same way, if your life is full of Scripture, when it gets shaken up, it stays clean on the inside. When your flight is delayed and you find out you're gonna be at LAX airport for four hours, if your heart is full of Scripture (I'm feeling convicted as I say this) and you get shaken up, it stays clean. When the wildfires come close to your home, when you find yourself hurting in the hospital, you stay clean, because it's full of Scripture.

I mentioned a George Barna poll to you at the beginning of the sermon, but sometime ago, Christianity Today published another poll about Christians, and their lack of Bible knowledge, and the results were staggering. According to one of the polls, just a little more than half of the adults in the United States could name all four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Less than half of this poll could do that. Only 40% can name five of the Ten Commandments. 82% thought that "God helps those who helps themselves" is in the Bible. 12% thought Joan of Arc was Noah's wife. It's kind of funny, but it's kind of sad, isn't it? 50% thought Sodom and Gomorrah were a married couple. And to sum it all up, the guy conducting the poll, Jim Castelli, said, "Americans, and by extension, we could say other countries as well, revered the Bible, but by and large, they don't read it. And because they don't read it, they're a nation of Bible illiterates."

I don't know where everyone's at this morning, but maybe some of you feel that way. You feel Biblically illiterate. You've never read your Bible. You've owned one your entire life, maybe you have three or four on the bookshelf, but you've never actually read it cover to cover. You don't know what it says. You've never memorized anything other than Genesis 1 or John 3:16. You couldn't find the book of Esther or the book of Titus, even if you had to. Can I just say, if that's the case, then when you're shaken up, you're not gonna look like this, because you don't have this inside of you.

Would a computer scientist say "Garbage in, garbage out" of a computer? We could say, "Clean water in, clean water out." But if it's not in, it's not gonna come out. You have to drink from the true medicine. You have to drink from the living water and the Bible tells you where that is. It tells you how to be born again. It tells you where your hope and redemption are. It talks about the precious blood of Christ that was given for you. It tells you how to find medicine for your soul and how your house can stand through trials, all these things. So you want to read it, and study it, and own it for yourselves. They say the greatest dust storm in American history will be when Americans take their Bibles off the shelves and dust them off. Could we say the same thing about Canada? You don't want to be part of that. You want to read the Word of God. Everything you need is found in this book. Everything you want is found right here. You want to study it. An advertisement for a phone book in the States says that, "This book was made to be battered, underlined, circled, written in the margins. The more you use it, the more valuable it is." We could say the same thing about the Word of God. This book is valuable when you use it.

How do you identify a Christian? Peter gives us three ways: A Christian is someone who loves the brethren, someone who's been born again, and someone who loves the Word of God. Does that describe you this morning? I pray that it does. Let's pray and ask the Lord for a blessing on the Word that we looked at today.

Father, we do thank you, Lord, for Christ, and for the change He makes in our lives. Lord, I thank you for those who are here, who do love your Word. I'm so encouraged every week by the believers here in the church, who come week in and week out, to understand the Scriptures, to know them, to fill their lives full of clean water. Lord, I pray You'll be honoured as we do that. Thank you, Father, for Your church. Thank you for what You've done here at Grace Fellowship. We pray, in the years ahead, as we move forward with membership and other things, You would be honoured in it, and You would help us to cultivate a deeper love for Your truth, and a deeper

love for one another. Father, may You be honoured in the rest of our service this morning. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.