

GROWN UP FAITH – Week 1

Video: When I was a kid, I would ask my dad questions that are kind of kid questions, stuff like, "Hey, who's your favorite kid? Is it me or Katy?" my sister. All right. I'm just going to talk, man.

Yeah. Go ahead.

I loved baseball, so I'd tell Dad, "Do you ever think I'd be as good as Nolan Ryan?" Because I really wanted to pitch, and I never did, because I was never that good.

Not too long ago, there was a thing that went on in my life where when I heard God has a plan, it made me angry. I really didn't like it. When Emily and I, my wife, found out we were going to have a kid, it's the craziest feeling. Me, a man child, is now going to have a kid.

A little over a year and a half ago, my youngest brother, Austin, went back to college. I remember my parents were a little worried about him. He was just dealing with a lot of stuff in his life at that point in time.

As I got older, life got more complex, and when life got more complex, questions naturally became more complex. I remember my dad, he sat me down one day and he said, "Hey, Jeremy, your mom's an addict and we're not going to make it, and you and your sister, Katy, are going to go live with your grandparents."

Shortly after being born into this world, something happened. We don't know what it was. There are all these theories, but we can't specify what it was exactly, but she went into heart and lung failure. We don't know what to do. How is this something that anybody deals with? Your brand new six-hour-old child is now dying.

I got a phone call from my mom in the middle of the night, "I can't get ahold of Austin. I don't know where he's at. He's not answering his phone." We hung up, and I tried to go back to sleep. I laid there for a few hours and I was a little restless. Then I got a phone call from my dad. It was probably 3:00 a.m. I picked up the phone and he said, "He's dead."

Somehow this was all part of God's plan. How is my daughter, my little girl, how is her dying in a bed somehow part of His plan?

I was really confused because I knew God was good and He was like ... He loved marriage and I never understood that. I would ask God, "Why would you do that?"

We spent 64 days in the ICU and miraculously, God did something to her body, stitched everything back together and made her heart work the way it was supposed to, made her lungs work the way that they were supposed to.

I was really angry, and I was really frustrated, and I was really confused and had all these questions for God.

It sent me down a journey of just asking God questions, things I'd never really understood.

Why would you let this happen to me? Why would you let this happen to my family?

How does all of this fit into God's plan?

And now I'm older, and I'm married, and I have kids. Now more than ever, I don't want to screw things up. I can't get it wrong. I'm at the point in my life where questions just aren't enough. I need answers.

Kevin Myers: Welcome to Grown-up Faith. The truth is we all have questions, and some of those questions are really weighty just like the stories that were shared with you. Our family has a combination of a blessing and burden that we're right in the middle of. Between last night going to bed and waking up this morning, my first-born son, Josh, and his wife, Kristina, made their way to the hospital and gave birth to our third grandchild, my first son's first, Braydon, his first boy, Braydon Alan Myers.

Really delighted and celebrating with them, and simultaneously there's some weight in this conversation for us. I talked with my son this morning about 6:30, and as he shared the news, he also shared there were complications and it's complex. In the birthing process, there was some trauma. Braydon was deprived of oxygen for a period of time. Oh, I don't know and have all the details. There's brain damage is what the doctors are saying. They got to see their little boy, but they took him to Grady Hospital and he's in the NICU unit and for the next three days will be in this cold therapy is what they call it. We're just catching up on all this information. Quite honestly, I don't want to be here. I want to be with my son. I want to be with my grandson, but as I talked with my son Josh he said, "Well, you can share it with the church because at one side it's a celebration. On the other side, there's great concern, and I knew that if we shared it with you, you would pray." So, could we take a moment?

Father, all of us are carrying some weight of burdens in our life, and so when we share this story and I even speak of my grandson, Braydon, it comes with a great sense of blessing and there's so much good and a great sense of burden. I know many are praying with me right now and saying, God, You are a gracious and kind and loving God, and we thank You for the gift of this young life, and now we ask that You would protect his life. We would ask for the miracle of no brain damage. I don't know how You navigate all that, God. I don't know how this'll all play out. I pray over my son and my daughter-in-law and I would pray, God, that You would knit this family together with their little girl, Brelynn, and that You would bring something miraculous of Your hand in the midst of uncertainty. We're just waiting, God, and our dependence on You is great. Take the prayers of Your sons and daughters and be as merciful as we know You to be. In Christ's name, Amen.

Congregation: Amen.

Kevin Myers: Yes, I know that for us to navigate through this season requires us to grow up, really, all of us in some sense to grow up. It's why the title of the book that I'm excited to bring to the life of 12Stone and the substance and the things that God has stirred in us for a grown-up faith. It's on all of us to grow up because when you grow up, you get the better things. When you grow up in marriage, you get a better life. When you grow up in leadership in business, you get God's better life. When you grow up in character, you get God's better life. When you grow through hardship and uncertainty, God, if you'll follow Him, will form Himself more deeply in you. There is a growing-up process that is intended in faith, and it's modeled and talked about in scripture.

Look at Ephesians, chapter 4. I'll just put it on the screen. We'll pick it up in verse 14, "So that we may no longer be spiritual children." The implication is, it's spiritually speaking, "So that we may all be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up." Everybody say that with me. We are to what?

Congregation: Grow up.

Kevin Myers: Grow up. Let's do it one more time so I can hear everybody. So that we are to what?

Congregation: Grow up.

Kevin Myers: Grow up. There is a growing up that God's designed us for, "Grow up in every way into Him who is the head into Christ," that we would grow up into Christ. That's His design. It's giving the imagery of your life is like a ship out on the ocean and to make sure that your life would have a rudder of truth that would navigate amidst all the winds of people's opinions and false religion and media influence and education and heresies and teachings that dismiss and deny the very living, loving God. Be very careful in your life because as those winds of teachings influence you, make sure you have the rudder of truth to navigate life so that you can grow up into the goodness and the greatness that God had created you for. There is a better and bigger life.

And Christ modeled that for us. He showed us what it meant to grow up. You could summarize it with this picture, kind of a little Venn diagram that integrates the mind and the heart and the will. The mind is biblical truth so that you can have that rudder in the midst of the world kind of influencing you and you don't get caught up in the world, don't be blowing around. Don't have your life blowing around in the way you do marriage and family and relationship and finance and character and moral life and ethics and values and your soul for eternity.

Don't get caught up in that. Make sure your mind is rooted in biblical truth and becomes a rudder to guide your life. Make sure that your heart is engaged in spiritual intimacy. Make sure that your will is following in holy obedience. And honestly, where the three of those come together, watch this. We'll give you the next picture. Where they come together is where you grow up. And you say, "Well, what do you mean by grown-up faith?" We mean the coming together of your heart and your mind and your will, and where they come together you grow up. That's why in chapter one of the book, we unpack that and then land at this picture right here. Then if we would grow up, we would be like Jesus. In Jesus, all three were perfectly aligned. This takes us to the better life that God created us for.

Now that's challenging to grow up, and we all know it because we have questions, questions like we already started with right off the top. I could put it this way on the whiteboard. We have 10,000 questions that we're asking in life, and those questions are practical questions and they're questions about how you do life and how you navigate relationships and how you manage career and how you do money and materialism and how you handle temptation that comes your way and what's going to be truth in your life and they're practical in life. But the truth of the matter is those 10,000 questions boil down to just 10 big questions. How many, everybody?

Congregation: 10.

Kevin Myers: 10. Say it with me. How many?

Congregation: 10.

Kevin Myers: 10 big questions. See, these 10 core, 10 foundational questions really form your world view, how you view the world. Stay with me. And how you answer these 10 forms, define how you answer the 10,000. You got to get these 10. And we're all asking the same 10 questions. Whether you know it or not, God answered these 10 questions in the Bible in order. That's how devoted to us God is to help us understand. Many of us don't know the 10 questions nor did we know that God answered them in order in the Bible. Let's look at the 10 questions together.

Is life an accident or am I here on purpose? It's the first question always because how you answer that defines your life. It kind of starts it. Why do bad things happen to good people? Can I really trust God? Why can't I make my own rules? Why can't God just accept me as I am? Isn't one way to God narrow-minded? What does it mean to be forgiven? Why don't Christians look different from everybody else? Who needs the church? Are heaven and hell real?

By the way, the first question and the last question kind of define ... Like all sports and any race, the start line and the finish line define the race. Listen, the first question, is life an accident or am I here on purpose? And the last question, are heaven and hell real? Those right there set the parameter. See, listen. If I'm here by accident and it's just circumstance and just the big bang. I wasn't created, I have no soul, and there is no heaven or no hell, well, then who cares? Live any way you want. It doesn't matter. Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow you die. Who cares? Don't worry about anything. Just live however you want. But if there's a God and He created you on purpose and you have a soul and there's a heaven and a hell and everything's on the line for eternity, that transforms the way you think and the way you live and how you answer all the other questions in life. And God graciously answered all 10 questions in order in the Bible.

By the way, those questions are so critical that those are the titles of the chapters of the book for Grown-up Faith. We got real, we got practical. We got in the substance of life. That's why I'm fired up to get this in the life of the church. We're going to moor down for a long time, and God's going to take us to new places, here within or outside the church et cetera because those are the substance. In fact, let me say it like this. As a parent, we've made this way too complicated. As a parent, you're really only answering 10 core questions. See, your kids in life, they ask 10,000 questions and you're trying to answer all and help them answer all these questions. But this right here is the foundation of parenting. You answer these 10 questions in an elementary form while they're in elementary, and then you increase the clarity and you answer it at its next level of complexity as they get into their teen and young adult life. And you send them out into the world as adults with adult answers to adult questions, all rooted in the 10. If somebody says, "Well, how do you raise your kids? How do you even raise them in faith?" Those are the 10 questions I ask and answer.

Now that the book's out, Jade and I are going to sit down and we're going to read a chapter at a time. I'm going to have my book. He's going to have his. He's going to read the first chapter. I kind of know it, so I'll sort of read it. And we're going to ask, "What did you learn? What are you going to do? What did you learn? What are you going to do?" And then chapter two, "What did you learn? What are you going to do?" Parents, this is how we raise kids. And every parent is answering these 10 questions whether they know it or not, either by design or default. And the world's attempting to answer this. How you answer them defines your life.

But God did more. God not only answered the 10 big questions. God graciously gave us the big picture. The big what, everybody?

Congregation: The big picture.

Kevin Myers: The big picture. He told us what on earth he's doing. And so, in the Bible, God gives us the overview, the picture, and I'm going to give it to you. See, because most of us are puzzled by the Bible. For most of us, the Bible doesn't make sense. If I had a 500-piece puzzle and I gave you 5, 10, 15 pieces of the puzzle, I just gave it to you, and I said, "Put that together for me," with 5, 10, 15, 20 pieces, could you figure out what the puzzle is, the big picture? No. That's how many people experience the Bible, Christianity, or faith. They got bits and pieces. They got stories. They're like, "Oh, yeah, Adam and Eve. That's right. That's the garden, the beginning thing. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And there's a guy, Moses. I've heard of Moses and The Ten Commandments. That's a story. And then Goliath, David. David and Goliath, yeah, I remember hearing about that. And then there's the Jesus character and Christmas, pretty popular. So, for that. There's heaven, hell issues."

But nobody's put the story together for you, and I'll admit, the Bible can be a complex book. It's not written in order. You don't read it like a novel. In fact, even if I had the 500-piece puzzle and I gave you all 500 pieces, listen. If I gave them all to you, I said, "Put it together," could you put it together if I didn't give you the box top with the big picture? Even that would be incredibly difficult. Here's why. Listen. Because the big picture is what makes sense of the pieces. And that's true in life.

You see, what makes sense of daily life from a single life to a dating life to a married life, to family, to friendships, to business, to finance, to ethics, to temptation, to morals, to funerals, you can't make sense of those pieces of life unless you have the big picture. It's the big picture that makes sense of the pieces. And today I'm going to give you the big picture. If nobody's ever done this for you, I'm going to give you the overview of the Bible from beginning to end. It's in the book Grown-up Faith, but I'm going to give it to you right now. If you're familiar with the Bible, you're going to say, "Why didn't anybody give that to me before?" I don't know. Here it is. I'm going to give it to you. If you're unfamiliar with it, it's going to start making sense, and over this series this is going to come together, but I'm going to do it. Ready? Here we go. By the way, if you're not ready, I'm going to have to redo everything I did, so across campus, let me say again, are you ready?

Congregation: Yeah.

Kevin Myers: Yeah, that was okay. It'll be better by the time I get done. Here we go. The Bible is one big story. The Bible is what?

Congregation: One big story.

Kevin Myers: One big story. It's in two halves, the Old Testament and the New Testament. You could call it the Old Contract and the New Contract, and it comes together in what you could call like a pyramid or a triangle. There are five major events in the Old Testament and five major events in the New Testament, and those events are mirror images, one of the other. And they come to a peak, a point, an apex, and it all turns on the person of Jesus Christ. Once you know the five events and that they're a mirror image, it all turns on Jesus, the Bible starts to make sense, so here we go.

The first major event is God and righteous people in paradise. Oh, God created us in His image, first in the Garden of Eden. It was all good. Good relationship with God, great relationship with each other. Everything was good. Well, then what happened? Next major event. Satan and sin enter, and sin unplugs us from God, separates us from Him. It brings disease, it brings death, sorrow, loss, all the stuff we're talking about right off the top of the [inaudible 00:19:32]. And so, the next major event, the world is judged and destroyed.

This is the moment with Noah where mankind continues to sin and we brought on ourselves death, and so God brings judgment and rescues Noah and his family. In other words, it's a do-over. We often think, "Man, if we just had a do-over, everything would be better." Well, we got a do-over and, yet, mankind returned to continue to sin. And as they increased and multiplied on the earth, the next event is a one-world government. This is the last time there was a one-world government. They all spoke the same language. They were building a tower up to the heavens. And God confused their languages, dispersed them in multiple tribes and sent them, if you will, back out to increase and multiply. And mankind is just left there with this. We were starting to build a tower that was kind of displaying our own god unto ourselves, and now they're dispersed, and we have this problem of separation and sin, and it's not good anymore like it used to be.

And the next major event in the Old Testament starts with Genesis 12 and it's the rest of the Old Testament. It is the old ... Come, everybody say it with me. It is the what? Old covenant. God made a covenant with Abraham in Genesis, chapter 12, and through Abraham, He was going to raise up a great nation. Give them a great land and through them would come a great Messiah. God's going to resolve this separation with God because of sin. God's going to take care of it for us. God's on a mission to restore us and redeem us.

In the Old Testament you have the 12 tribes of the nation of Israel, God's holy people, and all the prophecy that points to the coming of Jesus. That takes us to Jesus Christ. That is the apex where everything turns. The Old Testament is pointed to it. Now Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the Gospels, tell the story of Jesus. God in human flesh, God with us, and He lives a life of obedience+. He demonstrates grown-up faith, His mind, His heart, His will fully aligned with the living God. Then He voluntarily dies on the cross to cover our sin debt and then rises from the dead to prove He conquered sin and death, thereby offering us a new covenant. A what, everybody? A new covenant.

See, now we have the mirror image. What was in the Old Testament, the 12 tribes of the nation of Israel, God's holy people, we now have through Jesus having fulfilled the old covenant. He wrote a new covenant, and that is with the 12 disciples, the church, God's holy people and the next major event. By the way, if you're at the mall and you look on the map and you say, "Where am I?" they give you a little dot that says, "You be here." We are right in the midst of the new covenant, and what's coming? A one-world government. It's never happened since the Tower of Babel recorded in Genesis 11. But it's coming again, and it's a mirror image.

That made no sense when the prophecy was stated, but an Antichrist will come and rise up, and there will be a unity of language, a unity of economics, and that starts to make sense when you live in a world with the technology and the world's getting smaller. The next major event is the world is judged and destroyed. Peter wrote it this way, "It was previously by flood at the time of Noah. Next time, it will be by fire." The next major event is Satan and sin exit. God's now going to put an end to Satan. He's going to be cast into the lake of fire and all who follow him and dismiss God and said, "God, leave me alone," will join him. We will call it hell. And it ends with God and redeemed people in paradise.

See, wherever they began, it ends. God is very much on purpose, and it began in the Garden of Eden and we had the tree of life and we lost access to it, and now Revelation ends with, "Now the tree of life is available to us for the healing of the nations and God is on purpose." He's been on purpose and where it all started, he's going to make sure it all ends for our good. That's just how on purpose God really is, so we could know His story. Isn't that awesome? Thank you, God, for telling us what you're doing. And we can know His story, and this can make sense and connect in our lives. And we tell that story and right in the book Grown-up Faith. Listen, not to debate it, not to debate the story, but to tell the story because you can't hardly discuss or debate what you don't know.

It's not apologetics. It's an invitation to learn a story, and it drives through the questions like the first one I put in your notes. Let's hit the first two. Is life an accident or am I here on purpose? That's the question we're asking. We all understand that's a weighty question. Is life an accident or am I here on purpose? How do you grow up into Christ in this? Well, grab your Bibles, turn over to Genesis chapter 1, verse 1. It should be the easiest scripture to find. It's on page one. Tell your neighbor if they're having a difficult time. Grab your Bibles across campuses. If you're on a mobile device, it's Genesis, chapter 1, verse 1.

Here we go. Is life an accident or am I here on purpose? Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, in the beginning God ..." That's a ... "In the beginning, God created ..." By the way, the Bible starts right there, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." It does not explain God. It just recognizes Him. He doesn't need explanation. Stay with me. Are we here on accident or on purpose? Well, we're here on purpose. God created

life. Write it down, put it in your notes. God created life. Everyone across campuses, online, anybody who's listening in another church, another location, here we go. Say it with me, God created life. One more time, all loud and proud, God created life.

Congregation: God created life.

Kevin Myers: One more time. God created life.

Congregation: God created life.

Kevin Myers: That's what he's telling us. God answered the first question for us because He knows that the most important question you're ever going to answer in your life is, am I an accident or am I here on purpose? God created life. And by the way, that means we have a beginning. God has no beginning. God has always existed. But we have a beginning, and in our beginning, God already existed, which means this. We're not the center of the story. Listen, when you're trying to figure out your origins and you keep starting with yourself, you're in trouble because it didn't start with you. We're not the beginning of the story. We're not the center of the story. This is all God, and what did He do? Turn the page.

Chapter 1, verse 27, "So God created mankind in His own image. In the image of God, He created them. He made them male and female. He created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful. Increase in number. Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'" We are here on purpose. That's what God wants us to know. We're not some random accident. And by the way, when you answer this question, it influences the 10,000 other questions you have in life.

Let me take a moment. I jotted down, I just ... I wrote. Here's examples. I want you to understand how this question answers and influences and informs so many other questions. Let me illustrate, identity. Here's how I wrote it down. You wrestle through it yourself. If the world is by accident and there is no God, then materialism is everything and your accomplishments is your identity. You're only as good as what you do, so no wonder way back when, Ted Turner said things like, "Life is a game and money is how you keep score." Hey, listen. That makes sense if you're an accident, but if you're created in the image of God, then your identity and worth is knit to your creator, and that's a completely different way to answer life.

Well, I listed some more. Creation care, do we treat this world as our own, to be used by us any way we want or is it a gift that we steward? The value of life, how do we settle our minds on matters like abortion? Boy, is that getting hot these days. Is it just a piece of tissue, of flesh? Or is it a life created by God, precious and on purpose? Marriage, is God behind that relationship, the creator of marriage, or do we just redefine it any way we want? Gender, is there a design in creation or do we make it up as we go? Sexual expression, are we just animals with instincts and sexual appetites or are we moral beings in the image of God with greater meaning? Listen. That question, is life an accident or am I here on purpose? is a big question. It's huge. And how you answer it will define your life.

How awesome. God made us, God loves us, God values us. Guys, we are so important and critical and central to God. God created angelic beings and they're spirit beings. God created animals and they're material beings. But when God created us, He created something unique, in the image of God, spirits wrapped in a physical body. Now I know everybody doesn't believe that. I know many of you listening do not believe that. But we still all live by faith. We all live by what?

Congregation: Faith.

Kevin Myers: We all live by faith. If you believe in God, if you're a Christian, it took a leap of faith. If you're an atheist, it takes a leap of faith. But we all live by faith. I believe in God and I'm a follower of Christ. I'm a Christian because I just don't have a lot of faith and I took the shortest leap for me. See, when you tell me that I have to believe that there was nothing and then without the influence of a creator, nothing big-banged into something with life, that's not science. That's faith. Stay in this. You tell me I have to believe that less complex forms of life unexplainably evolved into higher forms of life and intellect, species, evolution. That's faith. I just don't have that much faith.

Everybody's got to wrestle this down and figure out what are you going to believe. But it's why I wrote something in the book. My job isn't to convince you. I'm just going to tell you what I've wrestled with and how I got there. Over here, I wrote about it, which I think will just kind of help make sense. I hope it does. I don't know. "I own a 2006 Harley-Davidson Heritage Softail Classic, one of the finest motorcycles on the road." Amen would have been appropriate across all the campuses. You weren't ready, but I know that's what you wanted to say.

"Riding is one of my favorite ways to clear my head and reset my soul. Suppose I was to tell you that billions of years ago, the cosmos began to form out of nothingness. Plants and animals were slowly formed through random mutations and natural selection of those best suited to survive. Over time, some species developed. Intelligence began to dominate the earth. They developed their own moral code and grew in wisdom and knowledge.

"At the same time that amino acids were doing their thing, metals in the earth began to collect and randomly take shape. Cylinders formed. So did rods and bearings. Some metals took on the properties of structural frames, while others took on the properties of fenders and handlebars. Minerals spontaneously joined together to create pigments and they coalesced and attached themselves to the frame and the fenders. Petroleum deposits were heated below the surface of the earth. Over the course of millennia, waxes developed and decals came into existence with random letters forming the words Harley-Davidson and behold, aha." It's not in the book that way, but I just ... That's the implication. "The Softail Classic emerged." Ooh.

"Maybe you think I'm insulting your intelligence by suggesting that a motorcycle could be formed as a result of random events. It's not my intention, but I think you get my point. I can't believe that the formation of a motorcycle, boat, car, or building could be the work of self-directed nature over the course of millions of years. You probably don't either. Yet, many people take it on faith that the universe and animals and human beings, which are infinitely more complex than any motorcycle, were formed randomly in the same manner without the guidance of some kind of intelligence and a universe with entropy, inertia, and expansion where those are the rules. I don't think life accidentally organized itself, so I take the shortest leap."

Each to his own. Everybody's got to figure out how you're going to wrestle that down. But know this. We all live by faith. Everybody does no matter what you believe. You're a Christian by faith. You're an atheist by faith. And I think while I know science cannot prove the existence of God, it cannot disprove the existence of God. I just think it points to God. What Sir Isaac Newton, the scientist, said makes sense to me, "The most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful being, and on account of His dominion, he is wont to be called Lord and God."

That makes sense to me. It's probably why Solomon wrote in Psalms 24:1, "The fool says in his heart there is no God." Because all that's left is that you're God or that you're an accident. And that's a level of faith that makes no sense to me in life. But know this, the way God answers it, you're not an accident. Everything

started in the garden on purpose. But if everything was so good, why are things bad? Really, nine months of a beautiful, perfect pregnancy and my grandson gets born, little deprived oxygen moment, unexplained difficulties, brain damage. How do you make sense of that in a world of good?

Turn to Genesis, chapter 3. Let's go. Let's go to the next section. Chapter 3, verse 1, "Now the serpent was craftier than any of the other wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say you must not eat from any tree of the garden?' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden.'" In other words, he was saying, No, you can't have anything. "Oh, is that what God said? You can't have anything? 'No, no, no. God gave us all good. There's only one thing you can't eat from.'" That's where it's going. The woman said, "We may eat fruit from the trees of the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that's in the middle of the garden and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" He didn't really say, "Don't touch it," but clear enough. If you eat it, you die. That's what sin is. Sin is death.

Verse 4, "You will not certainly die." See, that's the doctrine of the world. Doctrine of the world takes the word of God, the wisdom of God, the truth of God and says, "What God says is a lie and my lie is the truth." He confuses the whole thing. "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman, "for God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was her victim." I'm sorry, my bad. I was reading from the Hebrew, the original translation. I'll read from the English, "She also gave some to her husband, who was with her and he ate it."

By the way, many times women say, "Where would you men be without us?" The answer is the Garden of Eden. I don't write them. I just read them. I find no joy in that at all. I'm just saying. All right, since we're having fun, let me give you the next one. Do you know why Adam and Eve had the perfect marriage? Do you know why Adam and Eve had the perfect marriage? Look to your neighbor and say, "I don't know. Why?" Go ahead, I don't know. Why? Ready? Why did Adam and Eve have the perfect marriage? Here goes. Because Adam didn't have to hear about all the men Eve could have married and she didn't have to hear about the way his mother cooked. Boom, there you go. Ah.

"If you sin, you will surely die." That's what God said. See, why do bad things happen to good people? Because sin is death. Write it down, because sin is what?

Congregation: Death.

Kevin Myers: Sin is death. Say it with me. Sin is death.

Congregation: Sin is death.

Kevin Myers: Say it again. Sin is death.

Congregation: Sin is death.

Kevin Myers: See, God called something venomous and we called it harmless. God said, "This is venomous," and Adam and Eve said, "Ah, this is harmless." We do that. Let me show you the difference between harmless and venomous. This is a rubber snake. This is harmless. This is what?

Congregation: Harmless.

Kevin Myers: Harmless. Is anybody afraid? Anybody going to go running away? You know. Let me just ... Come up here. Just come right up here front of the stage. Okay. You can just test. It's just a rubber snake, right? Okay, there you go. You're good. Okay, you ready? Here we go. Watch it. That hurt you?

Speaker 3: Nope.

Kevin Myers: Messing you? See, it's harmless. Thanks, man. Have a seat. You wouldn't mind playing with this, right? Doesn't even matter. But the difference between harmless and venomous, well, I had to find a way to help you see the difference. So, would everybody welcome Tom. Tom, the snake handler, would you come on out here and would you help us with venomous? Yeah, everybody say, "Hey, Tom."

Congregation: Hey, Tom.

Kevin Myers: Yeah. Tom's got a little buddy right here. I'm going to show you the difference between harmless and venomous, but here's what's about to happen. A venomous is going to land on the stage, and when that happens, all of you at the other campuses are thinking, "I am so glad I'm not at central campus." For the first time ever, we thought we would do something a little different. We hired snake handlers for every campus. Would you please now come out on all the campuses. Come on. Don't you love that? Right here in central, we're like, "Yeah. Yeah, you enjoy this." All the snake handlers come out at the other campuses. Hey, Tom.

Tom: Hey, hey. How we doing?

Kevin Myers: What you got, man?

Tom: I got my little friend here.

Kevin Myers: Yep, yep. That's awesome. All right.

Tom: This is ...

Kevin Myers: Uh-huh.

Tom: Feel the tension in the room, can't you?

Kevin Myers: Yeah. You know what? Ah.

Tom: This is a timber rattlesnake. In the United States there are 21 species of venomous snakes; 14 of them are rattlesnakes. This is the only one you'll find in this part of Georgia. Southern Georgie has a couple of other ones. Timber rattlesnake also called a canebrake rattlesnake.

Kevin Myers: Okay. That's awesome.

Tom: Want to give it a shot?

Kevin Myers: You know, I'm good. I got mine over here.

Tom: I'll trade you.

Kevin Myers: We're both kind of doing the same thing.

Tom: Oh, yeah, just exactly the same thing.

Kevin Myers: Yeah. Yeah. All the same. How fast can they strike?

Tom: This guy, he can go from a strike position, which he's in right now, to injecting venom and back to his strike position in a quarter of a second.

Kevin Myers: Quarter of a second.

Tom: Two-tenths of a second. Yep.

Kevin Myers: Which-

Tom: You're not out-running this guy, but luckily, he's not extremely fast along the ground. He's lightning quick striking, but it'll take him at least two or three seconds to get to the front row. So, we're good.

Kevin Myers: Awesome.

Tom: Yeah. Get seats before [crosstalk 00:41:47].

Kevin Myers: Yeah. Uh-huh. Tell us about the venom.

Tom: [crosstalk 00:41:52].

Kevin Myers: What does the venom do?

Tom: This is one of the three most deadly rattlesnakes in the United States, and they have a very powerful venom. Of course, the venom serves two purposes. One is going to be to immobilize or stun the prey so it doesn't run away, and then the other one is to actually start digesting the food from the inside out. Once the venom gets in along the blood cells and the tissue, it starts breaking down that from the inside out. Usually, we rattle nice, but we're being a little quiet today, so now-

Kevin Myers: That's fine.

Tom: If you get bit by one of these snakes, the good thing is you're not going to die immediately.

Kevin Myers: So, it's going to just take some time.

Tom: Takes a little while.

Kevin Myers: You'll just suffer.

Tom: That venom has to get into the body. You usually die from secondary complications like renal failure and liver shutting down and all that kind of fun, so [crosstalk 00:42:41].

Kevin Myers: Yeah. Just painfully and slow.

Tom: You have time to make peace with God and call your friends and family before you go. But if you get treatment, it's okay. But the best thing to do is stay away from him in the first place, right?

Kevin Myers: And what about the rattle thing? What's the rattle about?

Tom: Well, we talked about his rattle. He is a rattlesnake, I promise, but he's just not rattling today. His rattle is there as a warning, as a safety to keep you away from him, because most things like this that are dangerous, he does not want to use his venom on you. He wants to be left alone, so yeah. But the rattle is definitely a warning for you to stay away.

Kevin Myers: Okay. Well, you know what? That's enough for me. That's all I need. I hope that's all the rest of you need. Let's say thank you, Tom. You can send those snakes-

Tom: It was free to bring him out. You have to pay me to take him away.

Kevin Myers: No, just go ahead and put him back. I'll keep mine.

Tom: All right.

Kevin Myers: You keep yours. We're good to go. Let's give it up. Let's say thank you, Tom. Yeah, I'm just going to ... We'll just make sure you're really done. There you go. I'm fine now.

Now, you understand the difference between harmless and venomous. And all God was saying is this, with the warning kind of like the rattle, if you hear that rattle, it's a warning you should run. If you sin, you will surely die. And so, everything was good in the garden, and then God said something that was venomous. We treat it harmless.

Honestly, that's why things like Braydon happen. Because in a world of sin and disease and sorrow and loss, my mom died of cancer and my brother died in a motorcycle accident. Bad things happen in the midst of good because we brought venom into the world. Satan and sin entered. The world's judged and destroyed. One world government and it leaves us wondering, is this it? We messed up and we have no hope? We have no help? Hmm. And that's where we pick up next week. And what do you do? When my son Josh texted me about Braydon and said, "Dad, we're trusting God." Now can you trust God? We'll pick up on that next week.

Before we go, let me just ask you a question. Where in your life are you treating sin as harmless?
(singing)

Speaker 5: Come on, let's sing this song with everything we got. Come on. (singing) Come on. (singing)