



281.890.1900
TheMETonline.org

Jones Road Campus
13000 Jones Road | Houston, TX 77070

Fry Road Campus | Hopper Middle School
7811 Fry Road | Houston, TX 77433

[Introductory video begins showing hand-written why-questions which quickly zooms out to reveal the series-graphic question mark filled with those questions. As a quick review we see eight cameo appearances of people who've previously answered the question: *If you could ask God one question, what would it be?*]

- Why is there so much suffering and pain in the world?
- How do I [get] eternal life?
- Why am I still homeless?
- Will there ever be peace on earth?
- Why cancer?
- Who created the Earth?
- What is our purpose?
- How do we get to heaven?

[The video ends displaying the series-graphic question mark filled with hand-written questions, surrounded by thumbnail pictures of the eight responders. We hear, as a background buzz, many why-questions being asked, overlapping one another, as if ascending to God simultaneously. When the video fades to black, Pastor Sal begins:]

Well, good morning, everybody. Welcome here in Houston to our *Jones Road Campus*. Those of you [who] that are at Cypress in our *Fry Road Campus*, we welcome you to this morning's message. We're in the last [of] a series of messages called *Questions*. Today the question is: *Would a loving God actually send people to hell?*

WOULD A LOVING GOD SEND PEOPLE TO HELL?

There are many times that I get the opportunity to share God's truth with you, and can do it in a very positive, loving way that will make you laugh and smile and clap and say: Amen! I wish this was one of those times, but this is a very sobering subject. I have family members [who] are actually, because of their choices and their decisions right now, [who] are heading to this place. I don't enjoy teaching on this subject. In fact, I may have mentioned it from time to time, but actually doing a message on it has been quite some time—years in fact—since I've done that. I have a difficult time trying to block this subject out of my mind because there are so many people [who] I am in a relationship with [who] are going to this place.

In fact, if you look at the teaching of Jesus, He didn't shy away from this subject. Thirteen percent of the teaching that he did was about this place that we know as (and we call) hell. If you look at His parables, about two-thirds of them dealt with heaven-and-hell types of issues. He was pretty serious about it. In fact, some of the most frightening things said about this place were said by the Lord Jesus.

Now today if you consider the word hell, it's been changed from a noun that describes (that is descriptive of) a place—of a destination in eternity—to an adjective; for instance:

- That was a hell of a game (or)
- My golf game has gone to hell.

There's no other word that we use in the English language (that I know about), there's no other tragedy, there's no other bad thing that we associate like this word *hell*. In fact—

- We don't say things like: Man, my golf game has gone to cancer—as horrible as cancer is (you know)
- We don't say (you know): What in the AIDS were you thinking?

We don't do that.

When we want to try to take this word *hell* and desensitize this word—

- To make it not as bad as it really is
- To joke about it
- To make light about it
- [To] make fun of the people that live there

[—we say:] One of these days, man, we're going to get to go there with our friends and we're going to parrrr-taaay! It makes it seem like hell is just an eternal *Animal House*. But we're going to see this morning that it's not, that it's anything but that.

In fact, the very words of Jesus paint a very different picture of hell for us. In *Matthew's Gospel*, chapter 13, verses 47-51. Here's what Jesus says:

⁴⁷ "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. ⁴⁸ When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. ⁴⁹ This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. {Then Jesus stops and asks a very sobering question.}

⁵¹ "Have you understood all these things?" [Jesus asked.]
{And His disciples replied:} "Yes," [they replied.]

Matthew 13:47-51 (NIV)

Now, when Jesus speaks about hell, He defines this place as a place that none of us in this building are going to want to go to. He says that hell is a place of emotional torment.

HELL IS EMOTIONAL TORMENT

Now people think that hell is a place with—

- No rules
- No regulations
- No religious people there
- No preachers telling you what to do

[They think] it is just a free-for-all. But nothing could be further from the truth.

The word *hell* is the word *Geenna* [pronounced *geh'-en-nah*] and it's translated hell 11 times in the *New Testament*.

When Jesus uses that word, He refers to an actual valley outside of the walls of Jerusalem. This is a valley [which] they used as their garbage dump.

- Anything that was useless
- Anything that was irreparable
- Anything that had gone bad

They would take it to the dump at night (in the dark) and they would burn it. All day long, 24 hours a day, every day of the week, every month of the year, there was a constant smoldering and flame and smoke of things that were being burned up that were of no more use.

Now when I go to the dump (and you go to the dump, if you've never been to the dump) the stuff that you throw out on the side of the road for them to take to the dump, you don't feel badly about throwing those things away. Those things have lost their usefulness, they cannot be repaired anymore. They're not worth anything. All you want to do is throw them in the garbage and take it to the dump.

Now the word *Geenna*—in the whole concept of dump—gives us the picture that people in hell will be consciously aware that they've been deemed:

- Worthless
- Irredeemable
- Useless

They realize they've been considered trash now for eternity. In fact, as they think in their mind, they're saying: God has trashed me. There is no use for me anymore. There's no way that I can be redeemed. All I am good for is to be thrown into the dump and to burn and to smolder for ever and ever and ever.

Jesus uses another word to describe hell in *Matthew, chapter 13, verse 42*. He says:

They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 13:42 (NIV)

I always used to think gnashing of teeth was just: {demonstrates a growling grinding of his teeth}—like that. But as I began to study this last week and look into it, it means more than just clenching your teeth and grinding them. (I do that at night now, you know? I've broken every molar I have grinding my teeth.) So it's got to be something more than that. And sure enough, it is. Have you ever said the word, "ugh"? Everything's so frustrating—ugh!

I can remember I usually use this word—in fact I'm sure I will this afternoon—driving home from church; I'll go:

- Ugh! Why didn't I use that illustration? I forgot! I missed the opportunity to use that illustration. (Or—)
- Ugh! Why did I say that? I'm going to get 100 emails Monday now!

Or, last week when we had an all-staff-guys' night out, and I got an email about it and I got texted about it.

It said: Hey, man, just wanted you to know: tonight, 8:30, we're going to go see *The A-Team*—it said what theatre it was.

I said: Great, I'll be there.

And so I got up and jumped in my truck and went down to the theatre, bought the ticket, *The A-Team* was playing the exact time they said [to] be there.

I texted and said: Hey, where are you guys?—because I didn't see them in the lobby.

They said: Man, we're inside the theatre, we'll meet you there.

I said: Cool! I got my ticket; I'm coming in.

I walked into the theatre and there were only 12 people in there and none of them were the guys on staff with me—none of them. Thomas [Hernandez, *Kids Associate Pastor*] wasn't there (you know)—nobody was. And so I said [to myself]: Ah, they're playing a joke on me—right? And so I looked around in the dark again. Nobody was there.

I said [pantomiming texting]: Hey, man, I'm in the theatre. Where are you guys?

They texted back: You sure you got the right theatre?

I went: Ugh! Gosh! Ugh! How could I do that?

I went to the one on [Texas State Highway] 249; they're at the one on [U.S. Highway] 290! Yeah, I missed the event:

- I missed the opportunity.
- I missed the event.
- I missed the chance.
- I showed up at the wrong place.

And then—oh!—the one I'll never forget is when I caught the tagged redfish that was worth \$60,000! Ugh! To this day every time I think about it—ugh!—I can't believe I had \$60,000 in my freezer. Ugh!

But here's what I know about those events:

- I'm going to preach another message and I can do better.
- I'm going to go to another event and I can't get to the right place the next time.
- And dear God [with hands clasped in prayer], please let me catch another tagged redfish; because if You do, I will go right to the weigh-in station and I will show them.

You know the thing about those things?—you get another chance.

You always get this other chance here in life, but in hell there are no do-overs anymore. In hell you don't get a second chance. All you get to think about over and over and over and over in your mind is:

- I can't believe I blew it!
- I can't believe I didn't give my life to Christ!
- I can't believe I didn't listen to that preacher!
- I can't believe I didn't listen to my mother!
- I can't believe I didn't listen to my wife (or to my husband)!

And over and over and over and over again you're going to replay in your mind the chances that you had; but you blew it and you're never going to get another chance. There is no next time, just eternal self-condemnation and—Ugh! Ugh! Ugh!—I can't believe I was so stupid to do that!

Hell also is not only emotional torment—

HELL IS PHYSICAL TORMENT

If you're a believer in Christ, when you die and the resurrection comes, you get to have a resurrected body. That's exactly what this passage is teaching:

- **There will be a judgment.** We're going to separate the good fish from the bad fish. The good fish get to go to heaven; the bad fish are thrown out into hell.
- **I'm going to have a resurrected body.** If you're a believer, you will. And it's designed so that you can enjoy eternal bliss in the presence of God, enjoying all that He has prepared for us forever and ever. No more tears, no more pain, no more crying—none of the bad stuff—all of that's gone and nothing but good is going to happen.

Not so in hell. They receive bodies, but theirs is for eternal torment and punishment.

Revelation 20:15 says:

If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:15 (NIV)

I can't think of two horrible ways of dying other than being burned to death and drowning. I've never come close to being burned. I've come close to drowning a couple of times—but never the fire. Can you imagine taking that last gulp of air, knowing: I'm going to die now? But it's really not your last and you really don't die. You're drowning—it's a lake of fire—

- It's not a place of fire
- ...a woods of fire (or)
- ...a house of fire (or)

—it's a lake of fire. And over and over and over and over again you get to that point where you want to die, but you can't die. And you're in excruciating pain and it never ends and it never ends.

Luke, chapter 16: Jesus is giving a parable—He's talking about heaven and hell—and He said: A rich man went to hell. In hell he lifts up his eyes and he calls to Father Abraham and says: Have pity on me and send Lazarus (the guy that went to heaven) just to take his finger and dip it in water and put it on my tongue. He didn't ask for a gallon, a bottle, a cup, a glass. He said: Just a drop or two—anything—because of this torment that I am in. [*Luke 16:22-24* (summarized)]

I have pain from time to time.

- I get a headache; I take some aspirin. After awhile it goes away.
- My back starts to hurt and get out of alignment, I go to my Chiropractor. And pretty soon I'm feeling pretty good.
- If I cast so much [pantomimes fly fishing] that my arm starts to hurt I just put it [the rod] in my other arm and I use that one. This one feels better after awhile and I start using that one again.
- If I get a cramp, I just walk it off. I know I can walk it off and it will get better.

But in hell there is no relief. I hang in with my pain now because I know it's going to go away. But in hell it never goes away; all it does is intensify.

There's emotional torment. There's physical torment. There's relational torment.

HELL IS RELATIONAL TORMENT

Same parable—after the rich man knew, “I’m not going to get a drink of water,” he starts thinking about his family. Here’s what he says:

²⁷ ...‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father’s house,
²⁸ for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’

Luke 16:27-28 (NIV)

He said: Go tell my brothers.

There are no parties with your friends in hell, [because] there are no friends in hell. Everybody is so wrecked—

- With their own self-condemnation
- With their own emotional pain (and)
- ...their physical pain

—and they’re in such agony that they don’t have time to think about somebody else’s agony.

They are totally self-absorbed in their own personal torment. And everybody will be so absorbed in it that there is no thought of bearing somebody else’s burden. Solitary suffering forever in hell is all you get. The only thought of others would be the occasional thought that you have people [who] you love on the other side of eternity who are making their way to hell to join you; and you don’t want that to happen.

If you know people—you’re a believer and you know people [who] are headed there; they’re in your own family—surely you don’t want them to go to this place. Even the people in hell don’t want people to go to hell. It’s so disastrous to the human soul. There is never any relief.

- That [is why they say:] Please would somebody go tell my brothers?
- That’s why we’re here as a church, because people in hell don’t get out of hell.

Only people here on this earth have the opportunity to tell others not go there.

Not only that, it’s spiritual torment.

HELL IS SPIRITUAL TORMENT

This is the worst part of hell, and it’s the hardest part (that I’ve found) to be able to explain. The worst part of hell is the spiritual torment. You see, even the worst of people in this world—

- The mass murderer
- The rapist
- The liar
- The cheat
- The thief
- The most pagan of pagans

- The most reprobate of reprobates
—at least lives in an age, in a world—
 - Where God is causing it to rain on the just and the unjust
 - Where the Gospel is being preached
 - Where acts of love are being seen
 - Where the Spirit of God is moving all over the earth—in and out of the hearts of men and women everywhere—trying to get them to come to Christ.
- Even people on death row give their lives to Jesus, but not so in hell.

God is active and He's present here in this age; but in hell, He chooses to be present—you ready?—by His absence. There is a conspicuous absence of God. Even right now we don't know the full brunt of sin (right now). We don't know the full power of Satan and all of his minions right now; because the Spirit of God is holding it all back, giving everybody a chance. But in hell it all busts loose—evils so dark, so reprobate, [and] so spine-chilling that they could not even be described—

- As Satan in all of his fury is thrown into hell
- Every demon is thrown into hell
- The absence of God holding anything back
- All that is evil and unrighteous and dark and sickening to the heart of God finds its way in hell.

And in hell the only thing that is not found is God. It's called utter darkness (utter darkness).

Did any of you go out last night and see how dark it was? But we knew (in just several hours) the sun's going to come up.

- Sun doesn't shine in hell
- A new day doesn't dawn
- It's the same darkness
- ...the same confusion
- There's never a breakthrough
- There is never any understanding

It is eternal—infinite ages of hopelessness and futility and confusion and chaos—in a state totally separated [from] God, with no hope of God ever coming down and checking on you. It's called utter darkness. It's called the bottomless pit.

I used to have dreams when I was a kid that I was falling. Now when I fall asleep at my desk I have the same dream. Sometimes I'm reading and I just kind of drift off, then—oh, man!—I'm falling and I get up. Why do you wake up?—because you don't want to hit bottom. It's a freaky feeling—isn't it?—to free-fall into nothing?

So here's this utter darkness. And right now God's holding onto your hand and He won't let you go, and you're holding onto His hand. But there'll come a day when you will let go. And the moment you let go—

- The moment in that eternity that you slip off into death without Jesus Christ (and)
- You let go of the hand of God (and)
- You make your choice, and He releases you

—the minute you let go you know: Oh, I have made a tragic, tragic mistake. And you'll try to get back up. But all you do is:

- Fall faster and further and faster and further against the only source of life
- [Fall] away from the only source of hope
- ...the only source of love (and)
- ...the only source of help that you would ever know

And you're falling and falling and falling and you're getting (more) farther and farther and farther [away], and you never hit the bottom. And it's that confusion, it's the absolute separation from God and you can't get back up. And you go and you go and you go and you never, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever get back—totally into spiritual oblivion. You can't get back. You fall and you fall and you fall forever.

In hell, there is no relief through annihilation.

HELL HAS NO RELIEF OF ANNIHILATION

In hell there is never the relief of annihilation. Listen, we have compassion for animals—don't we? And if you had a horse, and a horse broke its leg and it wasn't going to mend, what would you do? You would do the compassionate thing, the loving thing: you would euthanize the horse. You would put the horse down. You've probably had a pet in the past that got so old it couldn't control itself anymore:

- It was suffering
- It was blind
- It couldn't eat, couldn't hold down food

You did the loving thing: you euthanized the pet. You put the pet down.

But in hell:

- There is no annihilation.
- There is no end to suffering.
- There is no compassion.
- There is no pity.
- There is nobody to put you out of your misery.

You live in your misery forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever, living the most frightening moments of life again and again: the regrets of life, the thoughts of loved ones who are going to join you, slipping away from God even deeper and deeper and darker and darker.

That's a place I don't want to be in. That's a place you ought not [to] want to be. It's a place everybody on this earth does not want to be in.

So does a loving God send people to hell? God sends no one to hell; we send ourselves.

GOD SENDS NO ONE TO HELL; WE SEND OURSELVES

Listen to what the writer of *Hebrews* says. He says:

²⁹ what do you think will happen if you turn on God's son, spit on the sacrifice that made you whole, and insult this most gracious Spirit? ³⁰ This is no light matter. God has warned us that he'll hold us to account and make us pay....

Hebrews 10:29-30 (THE MESSAGE)

Let me combine for you hundreds of pages of Scripture with this one sentence: We end up in hell if we reject Jesus Christ—period.

- If we ignore His grace
- If we walk by the cross and say: I don't want anything to do with this.
- If we won't listen to His pleading and the Spirit of God working in our hearts, like He's working in some of your hearts right now

That is the only way that we go to hell. **We end up in hell if we reject Jesus Christ.**

Now, lots of people are in life and Jesus said: Here's what life is like. In *Matthew, chapter 7, verses 13 and 14*:

¹³ "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.

¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Matthew 7:13-14 (NIV)

All right, here's the picture—you ready? You're going to live in a gated community for ever and ever, one of two gated communities. And the decisions that you make today are going to determine where you're going to spend your eternity. (Now there at *Fry Road*, if you're watching, I'm going to step off the screen. The rapture didn't happen—all right?—I'll be right back; don't get nervous.) Here's what Jesus is saying: All of us are going together in life and we're aging, we're getting a little bit older. And all along the way as we walk with this great mass of humanity on this wide road—

- We're slipping up
- We're falling
- We're committing sin

—and we just keep going along with it.

Now, the reason why we don't take sin so seriously in this life is that we don't really understand who the sin is against. The sin is against God. And every time we sin it's like we're committing this cosmic treason against the One who made us. And so we go along and we say:

- Okay, God, we know that lying is wrong and that's a sin and you don't like it. But God, this is my life. This is my way. I'm going to do whatever I want to do. So I shake my puny fist in Your face and I say: I'm going to lie. I dare You to stop me. And we keep moving along.

- God, I know that adultery is wrong, and I know that it hurts people and it's against your law and you don't like it. But, God, I want to shake my tiny/puny fist in Your face and say: Watch this, God, I'm committing adultery and You can't stop me.
- And we do it with lying and stealing and taking God's name in vain. We constantly shake our fist: I dare You to stop me, God. You can't stop me.

All the time we are laying up for ourselves an eternity of torture in hell and we keep going along until—boom!—you walk right into a pulpit. You find yourself in church one day listening to some guy telling you that somebody named Jesus gave His life and paid the price for you so you wouldn't have to keep sinning—

- You could turn around (and)
- You could get your life straightened up (and)
- You wouldn't have to go to that place called hell.

Or maybe it was a Christian that you ran into, or maybe it was a Bible study, or somebody from *Campus Crusade*, or a *Navigator*, or your mother, or somebody who loved you like your spouse—it doesn't matter. You ran into the cross and you've got to do something when you run into the cross.

THE CROSS REQUIRES A DECISION

When you run into the cross it's decision time: **What am I going to do?**

- Some of these people—do you know what they do? They get down on their knees and they say:

Oh, God, I'm a sinner. I've sinned against you. I didn't even realize it. Now I've heard the story about Jesus. I ask You to forgive me of my sin. Come into my life and change me. I don't want to go to hell. I want my life to change.

Do you know what happens the moment they do that?—God redirects their life in this life and He redirects their life in the life to come. They're born again. They're saved. They're changed. They don't go to hell; they go to heaven.

- Do you know what happens to a lot of people when they bump up against the cross?
 - They bump up against the cross.
 - They hear the Gospel.
 - They know that Jesus saves.

Do you know what they decide to do? They decide to walk around—one big step around the cross—and they decide to take matters into their own hands to walk into an eternity that is utter darkness and chaos and suffering and pain and misery. The only thing you need to do to go to hell is to walk around the cross—is to say: It doesn't really matter to me; I am taking life into my own hands. They walk around the cross they bumped into.

When you end up in hell, don't blame God. He's done everything He knows to do and He can do:

- The Spirit of God pleading with you

- Listening to the Gospel being preached on all types of media
- Looking at people's lives that have been transformed
- The Spirit of God wooing you and begging you
- Preaching and people witnessing to you

You've got to really go out of your way to get out of the way of the cross. Don't blame God when you get there. You have no idea how awful it is. I don't know why you'd want to go there. I don't know why you wouldn't want to listen. But it is beyond description; I cannot tell you how gory and graphic and long it's going to be.

And all you're going to have to do [to avoid hell] is just come to Jesus and He will change the entire direction of your life. I think there are three logical responses when we understand about hell.

THREE LOGICAL RESPONSES:

1. FOR THE UNBELIEVER: REPENT

The first one is for the unbeliever, somebody who doesn't know Jesus Christ. Here's what I tell you today: repent.

- Drop down on your knees
- Ask Christ to forgive you
- Let Him come into your life, and redirect your steps here and redirect your eternity

I am telling you: It is real, as real as the voice that you hear; and even more so will be eternity. Come to Jesus now.

2. FOR THE BELIEVER: REJOICE

For the believer, those of us [who] trust Christ: rejoice. You're going to heaven. You've been spared that [torment in hell]. You bumped into the cross and, by the grace of God, you've accepted Christ into your life. You can't have a bad day anymore. On your worst day, here's the Good News: I'm not going to hell; I'm going to heaven. (I'm going to heaven.)

- Jesus saved me.
- It doesn't matter how much money I've got.
- It doesn't matter how sick I am.
- It's all temporary.

For eternity I'm enjoying the blissful presence with God with none of the junk I've had to put up with down here; because I walked through a narrow gate, down a narrow way, and I have found a blessed Heavenly Father who is going to give me an eternity. You don't have a bad day anymore. You have a bad day because you choose to have a bad day. God has chosen for you to share eternity with Him.

3. FOR THE MET: RESOLVE

Then for the Met, our Church—what should our response be?—resolve. Resolve to be close to people who are far from God. (To be close to people [who] are far from God.)

Listen to the heart of the apostle Paul. Listen to how he hurts for people [who] are far from God. In *Romans, chapter 9*, he says this:

¹ With Christ as my witness, I speak with utter truthfulness. My conscience and the Holy Spirit confirm it. {It's like: I'm in a court of law and I'm giving you my testimony and God knows, so listen to what I'm saying.} ² My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief ³ for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed—cut off from Christ!—if that would save them.

Romans 9:1-3 (NLT, 2004 edition)

Do we love people far from God with that kind of passion and that kind of sacrifice? Would you say:

God, this is my neighbor, Jim. Jim's so far from You. God, I'm so broken and burdened for him that, God, would You please, for his sake, would You cut me off from Christ? Would You allow me to be written out of the Lamb's Book of Life and would You put this person in there? Could I take their place so that they could go to heaven? Because they just don't understand, God; please, can I take their place?

Isn't that exactly what Jesus did? He said: They are going to hell, Father. I want to take their place. I love them so much that I want to give My life for them. I don't want them to go to that place. I want them to be here with Us in Our kingdom forever and ever and ever.

Would we be willing to take their punishment and give up being with God so they could? How do you know that you really-really-really love Jesus?

- When we really-really-really love people like Jesus did (and)
- We could sacrifice (and)
- We could give as an expression of our love

Because people all over the world are moving toward eternity.

And God has ordained our church to be:

- A beacon of Good News
- A rescue
- A soul-saving salvation-station.

This is it; this is the only detour. We put the cross up and we make people bump into it and [we] say: Now decide and please don't decide wrongly; because this is what heaven is like, and this is what hell is like, and this is where you're going to go when you make your choice.

This isn't a private club.

- This isn't the country club or the golf club, a place where we come and pay our dues and walk away.
- It's not a theater where talented people gather on this stage and they sing songs and they place instruments and they do videos. Boy, we just applaud and say: That really-really-really blessed me. We nod in approval [signifying:] That's what we really like. And then we walk away unaffected.

We're a body of people that God has anointed and appointed and empowered to proclaim that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. That's the bottom-line of every—and any—church that names the name of Jesus Christ when we tell people (that)—

- Heaven and hell are real (and)
- Jesus paid the price (and)
- He is available to everybody
- Just bump into the cross, bow down, and trust Christ as your Savior.

But sometimes—in fact, many times (I would say that):

WE LOSE OUR PERSPECTIVE AS A CHURCH

Sometimes we wonder:

- Why do we serve?
- Why do we volunteer in a *Life Group*?
- Why do we take care of kids in *Children's Church* and *Preschool*?
- Why do we work out in the parking lot and sweat? (You know)
- Why do we come in and fool with cameras and sound systems?
- Why do we prepare so much for messages?
- Why do we do what we do?

We do it because people die every day into a Christless eternity.

When we started *Fry Road*—do you know why we started our *Fry Road* site—those of you out at *Fry Road*? We started it because people out there die and go to hell without Jesus Christ. And you remember Pastor Bryan led you to have five—your five—remember that? Five people [who] were far from God that you're praying for, ministering to, and loving so they would come to Jesus? How are your five? (How are your five?)

Why do we come to church here, have all these big screens, and all the stuff that we have, and all the money that it takes to run this? Because what we do here is important. It's not just life and death. It is **eternal** life and death.

Listen to these stats:

- Every 1.8 seconds 102 people die.
- Every minute 6098 people die.
- Every hour 146,357 die.
- Every year 53.4 million people die. That's 10-to-12 times the size of Houston and its surrounding area—every year—people die.

The majority of those people die without Christ and they go to that place that you just sat through and had to listen to it be described.

So how important is what we're doing here? Let me tell you—you ready? I'm telling you, according to the Word of God and by the unction of the Holy Spirit, it's more important than anything else you do. Because—

- You can love your kids and they can still go to hell.

- You can do your job and you can still go to hell
- And your boss can still go to hell.

It is only through the grace of Jesus Christ and us standing in the middle of that broad road saying: Don't go down here—road out—you're going to die. That's the only thing in life that matters.

- What if you gained the whole world and lose your soul?
- What if your kids get educated but lose their soul? (and)
- ...your marriage stays together but you lose your soul? (or)
- ...you have a good time in church but you lose your soul?

It's not worth it. It's the most important thing that we do—more important than anything.

Let me ask you something: When was the last time you invited somebody to church? When was the last time you said:

Look, will you come with me? I know this sounds weird and you're probably going to have a lot to think about when this guy is through and you may not even like him. But I want to get you to Jesus—you may not like the music, you may not like the surroundings—but I will do anything I can to get you to Jesus.

When is the last time you wept for people? When is the last time that you were so burdened for somebody that [you prayed:] God, I just hurt inside for this person. Paul said: I hurt inside; I wish I was accursed and they were saved, I love them so much. Sometimes we just lose perspective.

Listen to what Jesus said, it's a sobering-sobering-sobering thought. *Verse 51* of the scripture that we read for today's text says this: "Have you understood all these things?" [*Matthew 13:51 (NIV)*] Do you know what He said? Do you understand the ramifications of this? There is going to be a judgment. I'm going to separate the good out from the bad. The good are going to get to go to heaven; and the bad, they're going to go to hell. They are going to burn forever. Do you understand?

"Have you understood all these things." Jesus asked. "Yes," they replied.

Matthew 13:51 (NIV)

Let me ask you something, Church. Do you understand what we're doing here? Do you understand these things? Do you understand that somebody you know may die today and they will die and go to a Christless eternity? And as for long as you are alive with God in heaven (which is forever) they will be separated from God in heaven in a place call hell? Reach out to your neighbors and your friends—get five.

Do you know why they set up there at *Fry Road* and tear down all the time and sweat like pigs before church?—because of the five people that they know—five people.

- That's why you're at church out there.
- That's why we're a church here.

- That's why we're a church around the world
It's to reach out to those people.

Maybe you're here for the first time and these thoughts have never really crossed your mind. Maybe you understand for the first time: Wow! I may have not liked all that he had to say, but I sure don't want to go to that place. You need to give your life to Jesus. You've come to the right place. Here's the Good News:

- You don't have to [go to hell].
- God doesn't want you to.
- He is doing everything He can to stop you.

You today, [if] you bump into the cross of Jesus Christ, bow your knee and your heart and say: Jesus, save me, I don't want to go there. I don't want my family to go there.

Those of us [who] know Jesus we're not going there and we ought to do everything to make sure our family doesn't go there. I've got a brother and sister right now [who] are headed there. They're the last two on the hit list of the family and they're going there. (You know)

- I don't think about them enough.
- I don't pray for them enough.
- I don't step in the way enough and say: Hey! Bridge out. Hey! Dead end. Hey! There's a cliff that you're going to fall over. Hey stop! No matter what you think about me, think about Jesus.

There are people in our lives that we need to get like that with, Church.

Let me ask you something. If you're on a pew right now where there is room for another person, that ought not [to] ever be the case in this church—why?—because:

- We know where they're going (and)
- We know the answer (and)
- We are compelled to go into the highways and the edges and make them come in.

Do whatever we've got to do. [Say:] Come in; listen. There is a King who loves you. There is a choice you have to make and you must give your life to Christ.

That's why we are a church, no other reason—that's it. People die and go to one of two places and God has anointed and appointed and elected, selected, empowered, and given His life to this place that people would stop on that wide road that goes to destruction and be pointed to the narrow road that leads to eternal life. That's why we're a church. If we do anything else, it's gravy. If we don't do that one thing, we really aren't a church.

So let's pray together as our heads are bowed and our eyes are closed. If you're here this morning and you think:

- Oh my gosh! I've never heard anything like that before.
- I don't know God and I want to know God.
- I don't want to go there.
- I want Jesus.
- I want to bump into the Cross

- I want to do the right thing,
- I want to give my life to Christ.

If that's you, here at the *Jones Road Campus* and there at the *Fry Road Campus* as your *Campus Pastor* leads you in this prayer, I want you to pray and give your life to Christ.

Then we're going to pray as believers and recommit ourselves to the thing that the Church is supposed to be doing: winning people to Christ, keeping them from eternity without Jesus.

So if you're here at the *Jones Road Campus* this morning and you've never given your life to Christ, I'm going to ask you to pray this prayer. Now that you know the realities of what you must do, this simple prayer expresses the desire of your heart. If so, as I say it aloud you pray it silently, and it goes like this:

Dear God, I bumped into the cross today and I don't want to walk around it. I want the cross to change the direction of my life. I want the cross to save me. I want what Jesus did to take me to heaven, to forgive me of my sins. So I bow my knee and my heart today and I ask You to save me, Jesus.

If you just prayed that prayer—and nobody's looking around—just slip your hand up in the air to say: I just prayed that prayer. All over the building, upstairs, God bless you. Anybody else? God bless you up on the side, in the balcony. I prayed the prayer—I'm not going—I just prayed the prayer. Good, God bless you. You can put your hands down.

That means the rest of us ought to be knowing Jesus. Let me ask you again: When's the last time God broke your heart for people that didn't know Jesus? We need the Spirit of God to revive our hearts for the things that are important. The things of man are not important; eternal destinies of people are important. Would you stand with me—not physically but in your heart—would you say:

- Pastor, our church needs to be revived:
 - To stop people from going to hell
 - To quit thinking about ourselves
 - To start thinking about other people around the world who are dying.
- Pastor I want Jesus to do that in me today.
- I want to be the spark that will cause revival.

If that's you and you want to be rededicated to the task, just raise your hand up high as I'm raising mine—nobody's looking around. All the way up. These are the folks saying: We don't want anybody going to hell. That's it, all the way up. Keep it up because I'm praying and I'm with you; I need the same thing. Put them up, put them up high.

So if your hand isn't up—and I'm not looking—if your hand isn't up, here's what you're saying; Just let them go to hell. You need to look at your heart, my friend. You need the Spirit of God to break you even more so than He needs to break the rest of us; because your heart is cold and calloused about the eternal destinies of people.

So, God, as our hands are up—my hand is up high, Lord—I pray that You would start in me, and the focus of my life once again would be standing in that broad road and pointing to another way:

- Pointing to the cross
- Putting it in front of people
- Letting them run into it
- Then helping them make the right decision

I pray in this room that all of us with our hands up would have five people [who] we are constantly praying for, and loving, and ministering to, and talking to—doing everything that we can—so that they would come to Christ and spend eternity with Jesus and with us in heaven.

God, I pray that our church would never be the same. I know this is a tough message. I know it's a hard thing to hear. But, God, we need to hear it because we're going to see it one day. We're going to experience it. I pray, God, that You'd bless our church to be one that always goes...in Jesus' name. Amen.

Lead Pastor: Dr. Sal Sberna

The MET
Metropolitan Baptist Church
13000 Jones Rd
Houston, TX 77070

Sermon Transcript Ministry
resource@TheMETonline.org

...they found [Jesus] in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.

Luke 2:46

(New King James Version)

Legend:

(words in parentheses) = spoken by the preacher *but unnecessary* to the core sentence idea

[words in square brackets] = additional explanation for clarity *not spoken* by the preacher

{words in curly brackets within indented quote} = spoken explanation *not part of the quote*