

My wife Karen is a good mother to our four children. She is a good momma, and I am gonna prove it to ya. I am going to prove it to ya with three questions.

What'cha do'in?	(repeat quicker)	<b>What'cha do'in?</b>	(repeat quicker)	What'cha do'in?
Where ya go'in?	(repeat quicker)	<b>Where ya go'in?</b>	(repeat quicker)	Where ya go'in?
What'cha know?	(repeat quicker)	<b>What'cha know?</b>	(repeat quicker)	What'cha know?

Every day when Evan and Audrey come home from school they have to answer Mommy's questions. **(pause)** How was school today? Did you play outside? Who did you play with? Did you get to have lunch outside today? Who did you eat lunch with? **(pause)** Basically, Karen is asking, What'cha do'in? Where ya go'in? What'cha know? These questions are one way Karen shows her love for our kids. Karen actively, daily takes an interest in what is going on in their lives. Karen cares enough to ask; to take an interest; to inquire so as to guide and protect. This is one way Karen look out for our children.

Now, let me ask y'all something. By a show of hands have you ever been asked those kinds of questions by someone who obviously thought you had done something wrong? **(pause to raise my hand)** ***Thanks Mom!*** **(pause for laugh)** That is the kind of situation the Apostle Peter was facing. The news had reached Jerusalem that Peter had gone to eat with Gentiles. Evidently, Peter had taken the good news of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. At this point the Way of Jesus Christ is only a small group of Jews in Jerusalem. The persecution was forcing Jews out of the city, but the Gospel had not been spread to the Gentiles. The Jews thought they were God's chosen people and the Jews were the only ones who could receive salvation. This had been the attitude and opinion of the Jews for centuries. They Jews believed the reason God allowed the Babylonians to come and destroy Jerusalem and send God's people into exile is because the Jewish people had been allowed to associate with and marry Gentiles.

A Gentile is anyone who is not a Jew. So the Jews thought they were only supposed to work with, marry, raise children with, play ball with and go to school with people who are Jewish. To put that idea into perspective it would be like the people of this town believing they were only supposed to work with, marry, raise children with, play ball with and go to school with people who are born and raised in Denton. The same argument can be made of the church. It would be like the people of this congregation believing they were only supposed to work with, marry, raise children with, play ball with and go to school with the people who are in this room. **(pause)** All y'all think about that for a minute. **(pause)** Isn't that a little – icky? **(pause)** Okay, that's A LOT icky. I know we live in the South, but, No. That's icky. However, there are churches who believe in that idea. They believe there is no need to reach out to people outside their doors. They behave as if people want to hear the Gospel they can come to us. There is no point in reaching out to them.

My sisters and brothers those churches **are** mistaken and the Jews **were** mistaken. They had it all wrong. The reason God allowed the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem was not because they married Gentiles. The Jews got into trouble with God for not doing what God told them to do. The Jews were supposed to be a blessing to the nations (Gen 12:3). The Jews were supposed to be a priestly nation (Exodus 19:6). Their chief export was supposed to be the Word of God; their Jewish faith; and a sincere desire to share just how good it is to be loved by God. What the Jews did instead was to import the culture and pagan practices of their neighbors. They brought in so much **BAD** the Jewish people turned away from God. What they were supposed to do was send out so much good their neighbors turn away from their idols and turned towards God.

In their passionately held misunderstanding the members of the Circumcision party were waiting for Peter when he returned to Jerusalem. They were ready to read Peter the riot act for spreading the Gospel among Gentiles. They are certain Peter has done something very wrong. (pause) My brothers and sisters, please, help me out with this. What is more wrong – doing what we are certain is right; (pause) or doing what God asks us to do? (pause) Y'all listen to this story.

The summer I earned my Eagle Scout award I was spending the summer working staff at Boxwell Scout Reservation in Tennessee. I had worked staff for three summers at another camp and wanted to try something different. Boy Scout summer camp staff usually work for about six weeks during the summer. During week four I was asked to cover for another staff member on the first year campers' overnight trip on Wednesday. Another staffer went with me, but it was his first time to work staff ever. We took the boys out to the prepared camps site. They set up their tents, and it started to rain. The boys hunkered down in their tents and we hunkered down in the staff tent. Then the rain picked up. (pause) Then the bottom fell out. There was probably an inch of rain standing on the ground that wasn't going anywhere. The boys' tents were soaked. Their sleeping bags were wet inside and out. Where did the boys go? (pause) The staff tent. The staff tent was up on a platform so it was dry. The rain was showing no signs of giving up. The decision fell to me. This was back before cell phones so there was no way to check the weather or check in with my boss to inquire about whether to make the boys tough it out or not. This was my first year at this camp and different camps handle this kind of stuff differently. After an hour of heavy down pour we decided to allow the boys to head back to the main camp and their dry tents. When we got back, I was in trouble. I didn't know if the weather kept up my boss would have come out and brought us back. I didn't know the protocol and I had no way of finding out. This camp saw those kinds of situations as opportunities to build character and wouldn't you know it. An hour after we made it back the rain stopped. I earned my own opportunity for character growth that night. A little teen slave labor is a good way to learn important lessons. Even when we make the best decision we can we have to be willing to stand by that decision, and face the consequences.

The Circumcision party thought they were to going to discipline Peter. However, at the end of this passage it is the members of the Circumcision party who are changed. God told Peter what to do 3 times. Peter followed God's direction. Peter went to the home of Cornelius, a Roman centurion in Caesare'a. There the Holy Spirit washed the Gentiles of that house clean, and Peter obeyed by baptizing everyone in the house – men, women and children. Peter was the obedient one in this story. It could have landed Peter in A LOT of trouble. After all the Jews had handed Jesus over to the Romans for crucifixion. The same could be done to Peter for going to the Gentiles. Peter was willing to do what God asked of Peter, and face the consequences for his actions. Can we say the same?

Are we willing to face the consequences for what God asks us to do? Church, are we willing to face the consequences to share the Gospel with everyone; both the poor and the working poor; the folks in the Springs and down by the lake? (pause) Are we willing to try, or are we too scared and too comfortable with our passionately held misconceptions? (pause) I think it's like my Mom used to tell me. "Faint hearts never won fair maidens." If we want to bring people into our church. If we want to lead people to Christ we have to face our fears, step out of our comfort zones and look for new ways to reach out to our neighbors? What's it gonna take to build new relationships with the folks up in the Springs? What's it gonna take to make new friends out on the lake and invite them to serve God with us here at Central? (pause) I don't know what God is saying to you, but I hear God saying to me we will never get anywhere if we don't get up off of our pews and try.

In the name of Jesus Christ,  
Amen.