

Episode 268

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions podcast. We just recently finished our series on questions about the end times, so we were discussing what series is next. And not too long ago, the Catholic Church elected a new pope, and the Catholic questions started pouring in related to the pope and the papacy, but then related to all things Catholic. And this seems to happen whenever there's a pope election or a major development in Catholicism.

Shea Houdmann

And it's interesting, but GotQuestions.org is not a Catholic ministry. We don't claim to be. We try to make it abundantly clear we're not, but people still love asking us questions about Catholicism, whether they are Catholic or non-Catholic. So Jeff, the managing editor of BibleRef.com, and Kevin, the editor-in-chief of Got Questions Ministries, we're going to do, I think, a shorter series, maybe six, maybe seven max episodes discussing some of the common questions we get about Catholicism and why we think they're important.

Shea Houdmann

But throughout this whole series, even when we express strong and serious disagreements with some Roman Catholic doctrine and practice, please know this is not a personal attack on Catholics. All of us have Catholic friends, some Catholic family members whom we love dearly. So our goal here is to communicate the truth of God's Word about these issues, not to bash any person, not to question their motives for these beliefs. And truly, all three of us would agree that there are true believers in the Roman Catholic Church. The gospel is still there in some form that people still do get a picture of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. And through that, people can still be saved, even in the Roman Catholic Church, despite what we think are so many distractions, disruptions, or things that can point people away from the gospel of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, and Christ alone.

Shea Houdmann

But in today's episode, we're going to be discussing what ultimately is the foundation of all of it, and that's, what is the authority? Is it scripture, or is it scripture plus tradition plus the magisterium plus decrees from the Pope plus all of these things? And ultimately, as Protestant evangelical ministry, we believe that scripture alone is to be our authority for faith and practice. And I think you'll see throughout this whole series, you'll see your source of authority makes all the difference in the world. Once you no longer hold scripture as the final authority, or as the ultimate authority, it opens up the

door to all sorts of things to creep in, doctrines to develop over time, and so forth.

Shea Houdmann

So, Kevin, as we prepare for this episode, and especially this issue of scripture alone, what are some of the key points that you think our audience needs to know as we prepare to discuss Roman Catholicism and its comparison to evangelical Christianity?

Kevin Stone

Well, just for starters, I would say that tradition is only valid if it comes under the authority of God and his Word. That's the view that we take. I was doing some reading here this past week, and I ran across an illustration that a Bible teacher was using to compare the system of authority, the authority structure that the Roman Catholics use versus that of the Protestants. And in Roman Catholicism, according to this illustration, they see authority structure as a three-legged stool. So, you have scripture as an authority, you have tradition, and you have the magisterium, which is the teaching of the pope in concert with the bishops, the official teaching of the church. And so, those three are all given equal weight. Scripture is an authority, but so is tradition. In fact, it's an equal authority as scripture. And in the magisterium, the official teaching of the church is also an equal authority right along with scripture and tradition. And so, that's the Catholic view.

Kevin Stone

The Protestant view, according to this illustration, he pictured it as a single marble pillar that's labeled scripture. You know, that's it, sola scriptura. And that's our foundation. That's where we rest our faith, is on scripture alone. And that's not to say that there are not other influences in our lives, may direct us, but it all comes under the authority of scripture. We make sure that whatever traditions we're doing, whatever practices that we are allowing in the church, they are biblical in the sense that they are pointing us to Christ, pointing us back to scripture, and in no way disagreeing with scripture, in no way contradicting it. And so, just very basically, that's the difference between how the Catholics view the structure of authority and how the Protestants view it. And of course, we take the view that scripture alone is the ultimate authority.

Jeff Laird

There is complication in this, mostly because everybody likes simpler ideas. And human beings, we have a tendency to drive towards what we call caricature, which is like a cartoon. It's an exaggerated, oversimplified version of something. In debates, it's what we might sometimes call a straw man. And both sides, from Catholicism's perspective and from Protestants' perspective,

have a tendency to do that to the other, where we take this slightly silly reductionist view of it.

Jeff Laird

So, for example, in Catholicism, the cartoon version of it is to say that Catholics just believe that whatever everybody has been doing must be fine. And that's what they mean by tradition. You know, this is how we decided to do it, so that must make it right. Catholics have a tendency to flip that on its head and say, well, Protestants believe that if it's not a literal word written in the Bible, then you can never believe anything from anywhere that anybody has ever said ever. They also would say that the Reformation just came out of nowhere, that for 1,500 years, we had no idea what we were doing as Christians until Martin Luther figured it out. And that's what Protestants believe. And that, again, you know, very cartoonish kind of an idea.

Jeff Laird

So in the truths of this is exactly what you were talking about, Kevin, is that there's a little bit of a subtler view to it. Catholics believe that the teaching of the apostles is being passed down through the church, and that makes the institution of the church the arbiter of truth, the one who tells you what's right and what's wrong. And it actually leads to this circular problem, because when you say, how do I know if something that's being taught is right or wrong, you know, maybe a tradition is not correct. Maybe we are drifting in the wrong direction. How do we know if it's not? Well, they say, well, you appeal to the church, but the church is then shaped by, you know, these shifts in these traditions.

Jeff Laird

Catholics would argue that their doctrines do not change, but that they develop. And that's where the real key problem comes in for that, is that there is no question that Catholicism has pretty drastically altered its approach to certain issues. And the discussion from their point of view is to say that these are not changes in doctrine. These are the exact same doctrines we've always taught. They are just developing on the basis of where we're coming from.

Jeff Laird

So it's not true that Catholics just simply believe that tradition, the way we think of tradition, typically as Protestants, where it's just, oh, this is my family's done this for 20 years, or this is the way, that's not what they really mean when they say tradition. But that doesn't mean that what they're relying on is actually reliable. So not only do you have the circular issue, but when you actually talk to Catholic scholars, theologians, apologists, even then you start to get a circular reasoning into this, where ultimately the appeal to authority

never comes down to scripture or the Holy Spirit. It always comes down to what does the church say.

Jeff Laird

So the way I like to think of it is as a chain that's hanging from a point, and there's plenty of links in that chain, and those links are useful. But at some point in time, you have to have one that's anchored, and that's the ultimate one. And when you actually get into discussions about theology, Protestants have to admit, yes, there are times where there's going to be struggles for us to know what is and what is not, because we need to rely on the Spirit. We can't say, well, most people believe it, so it's true. My pastor says it, so it's true. I like it, so it's true. That's a little bit of a conundrum.

Jeff Laird

Catholics have the conundrum of, what if the church is wrong? The problem is that as a non-Catholic, I have the ability to say the majority could be wrong. My church could be wrong. My pastor can be wrong. But the Catholic view essentially says, whatever the general Catholic church says must be true. But that means that there's no check, there's no balance, there's no curb on where things can drift, because it's a tautology. As long as the church is right, the church is right. So it's a little simpler and a little more complex than we sometimes make it out to be, but these concerns and these problems are very real, and Catholicism, in my mind, has a serious problem with the circularity that comes into this.

Shea Houdmann

Well said, both of you. Excellent points. My different interactions with Catholics over the years, what both of you shared is absolutely true. The circular reasoning, the lack of any solid foundation that this is absolutely true and it's never changing. Well, Scripture is just one peg in that stool. Can Tradition of the Magisterium actually override Scripture or clarify Scripture to the point it's actually saying something different from what it actually says?

Shea Houdmann

My wife, McLissa, recently had a Catholic friend ask her if she'd be willing to take a look at this Catholic Answers type of site, something similar to GotQuestions, kind of an ask-the-priest sort of thing. And so she kind of followed it on social media just to kind of see the type of questions that they were receiving, comparing to what we receive at GotQuestions.org. And one of those fascinating things she noticed was, while GotQuestions, a lot of the questions we get are, what does the Bible say about? On this Catholic website, it was, what does the Church teach about? And that right there, to me, illustrates that the key difference is, is your source of authority Scripture

or your source of authority the Church? And like I said, that was tremendously eye-opening.

Shea Houdmann

And secondly, Jeff, you talked about the straw man or a caricature version of this. And yes, Protestants do this to Catholics as well, but with the sola scriptura, what they typically attack, it's almost like a solo scriptura, which would be, there is no truth outside of the Bible, which is not what Protestants believe. Sola scriptura is that Scripture is our sole authority for faith and practice. It doesn't mean there's not truth elsewhere. Or even as another view, prima scriptura, which basically Scripture is the supreme authority. There are other sources, tradition, et cetera, but Scripture has to be the primary. I think Protestants would actually be okay, generally speaking, with prima scriptura, but the way the Catholic Church operates, it doesn't end up being any of those.

Shea Houdmann

And that's where the difficulty comes. It's like, how can you operate with no solid foundation? And Catholics will often, I've had this conversation multiple times where like, well, the Bible doesn't even teach sola scriptura. It's like, okay, I would agree. There is no verse in the Bible that explicitly says the Bible alone is the sole source of authority for faith and practice. But I would point to a verse like say 2 Timothy 3:16 to 17, which again, doesn't necessarily argue for sola scriptura. But what it says is all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. So if Scripture on its own is able to make the man of God complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work, that sounds awfully close to sola scriptura.

Shea Houdmann

If Scripture alone can make us thoroughly equipped for every good work, and the word translated complete is actually the Greek word for perfect. It's not saying we're perfect, but it's like we are perfectly equipped for everything we need to know and do to follow Christ. Then how can you say we need church tradition, we need thousands of years of magisterium rulings, we need the Pope to issue decrees, et cetera, et cetera. If Scripture alone can make us thoroughly equipped for every good work, why do we need those other things? And I've never quite heard a Roman Catholic give a good counter-argument to that.

Kevin Stone

Yeah, I like what you say about the prima scriptura, because we don't throw out the creeds, right? We don't throw out the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene

Creed, but these are summarizing Scripture. I mean, those creeds are valuable because they come under the authority of Scripture, and they point back to Scripture, and they are just a wonderful way to express biblical truth, but they're not Scripture in and of themselves, of course.

Kevin Stone

Jesus made a very clear distinction between God's word and man's word, because Jesus ran up against tradition in several places in the Gospels. In Mark chapter 7 is one of those places where he runs up against the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Scribes. They all had their traditions. They had a lot of tradition, and it was binding on them, and they taught that these traditions were binding. But Jesus calls them hypocrites. In Mark chapter 7, he says, well, did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites? As it is written, this people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. In vain do they worship me. There's worship going on, but it's not from the heart, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.

Kevin Stone

So, they are teaching the commandments of men as if they were the commands of God, and Jesus says, no, there's a distinction. Just a couple of verses later, he says, you nullify the word of God by your tradition, which you have handed down. He says something very similar in Matthew chapter 15. Pharisees accused Jesus and the apostles of breaking the traditions that were handed down by the fathers, and Jesus responded with a rebuke. He said, why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? And see, that's where tradition gets to be wrong, when it starts leading people to actually break the commands of God. It starts working in opposition to the word of God. It becomes a distraction to the word. It leads people to break the word.

Kevin Stone

Interestingly, those traditions that even the ones that Jesus was combating as being opposed to the word of God, those traditions were not instituted originally to oppose the word of God. They were put in place in order to help people to obey God. The intent of those traditions was actually good. They weren't trying to inflict spiritual harm on anyone, and yet as time went on and people got their eyes off of the word of God, off of the God of the word, and onto the traditions, problems started. So, there's a difference between keeping the tradition and traditionalism. So, keeping the tradition may be fine, depending on the tradition, depending on the motive for keeping the tradition. But traditionalism, just keeping the tradition for the sake of keeping the tradition, that is, faith in the tradition itself, well, that's going to be fraught with

problems. And I think that's what Jesus was addressing in those two Gospels, those two passages that I just read.

Jeff Laird

Right, and the Catholic response to this general idea is going to be that Scripture actually says that we're supposed to follow traditions. So, they will cite verses like 2 Timothy 2:2, 2 Thessalonians 2:15, 1 Corinthians 11:2. These are places where something is said like, pass down the traditions, you know, use the traditions, relying on the traditions. My problem with that is we're discussing the idea that Catholicism claims that doctrine develops, and Jesus made the point that the Pharisees, sometimes their doctrine developed to the point that it inverted the entire purpose. So, where, why the change? And when you look at those verses that mention tradition, you always see this reference that says, as I taught to you, as passed down. It doesn't say just tradition in general or the tradition of the teachers. It says that you can teach what you were taught.

Jeff Laird

You also see that in those instances, you have things like Acts 17:11, where now you have an issue where people are commended because an apostle says something, and they're commended for going to Scripture to see if these things were true. Now, strictly speaking, they shouldn't have been commended for that if this magisterium concept really rings. They should have been commended for believing Paul, but what they were commended for is that they went to Scriptures to see if it was accurate. Paul even said in 1 Corinthians 4:6 not to go beyond what is written in these things.

Jeff Laird

So, here's where this begins to become an issue, is I actually would, I would support the textbook definition of the magisterium concept of Catholicism as it's stated, sort of in theory, if practice matched it. Because the idea is that tradition in Catholicism is passing down the oral teaching of the apostles. Fair enough. You know, fine. I would say I can understand that being authoritative, and if I could look back at the swath of Catholic doctrine and say that you have this remarkably consistent approach to all of these major issues with some bubbles up and down because of culture and so on and so forth, I would be willing to look at that and say, yes, actually that does make sense. So, even if I can't find it in Scripture, it seems like the oral teaching of the apostles has been passed down.

Jeff Laird

But when you see things that develop, which really means they kind of come out of nowhere and become official doctrine, now you're starting to say, but wait a minute, this is no longer passing down the traditions as taught. This

gets into teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. And there again, we get into circularity because when you talk to Catholics about unanimity, you know, was this actually a teaching of the early church? They'll say, well, look at the church fathers. You say, well, these church fathers disagree. And they say, well, some church fathers were heretics. Well, how do I know which ones were heretics and which ones weren't? Well, the ones who agree with what we say now are right and others are not. You say, it seems like popular opinion is driving this. And they say, well, it's not. But then they'll quote people like Tertullian, I think it was Tertullian, who basically said, you know, if one church comes up with a bad idea, it's probably a bad idea. But if lots of churches come up with that idea, then it must be right because the assumption is that it's the magisterium of the church that's correct.

Jeff Laird

But now, again, you see how there's no break on this. And this is why when you look at development of Catholic doctrine, you do see that it goes through this ladder effect of some people believe it. A lot of people believe it. We'll let you believe it. Most of us believe it. We all believe it. Now you have to believe it. And especially with things like the assumption of Mary and her sinlessness, co-redemptrix, and all these other things. These are things that were not even discussed remotely in early times. You see it in things like celibacy of priests. That's a fairly fundamental concept to go from leaders in church are allowed to be married to the leaders of the church must be celibate. Saying that that's a development, but it's not a change to me comes across the same way as saying an annulment is not a divorce. And I understand that there's philosophical differences between that. I get those, but like real talk, an annulment is a divorce. You know, a development the way Catholicism is thinking of it is a change.

Jeff Laird

So yes, you can see shifts. You can see movements in Protestant beliefs and theology, but there's always this, this leash, this tether, which is the written word. You can get away from it, but you can only get so far away from it. When you say that the church itself is the authority, you're moving the anchor point so that the perspective you look at scripture from changes to the point you can almost make it say anything that you want it to. So we don't want to make a cartoon version of what tradition means, but we have to accept that even in its strongest and most robust form, what we see in practice and what we see in theory does not match what you would expect or what you'd hope for.

Shea Houdmann

Jeff, I love what you said about the Protestant church being tethered to scripture as our source of authority. I mean, that's an excellent illustration in that where stands it written is kind of a, one of the clarion calls of the Reformation is like, unless you can show me where it's written in scripture, I don't care. This tradition has been around for a thousand years. It needs to come from scripture. And so every Protestant church you go to, there are traditions, denominations have tradition, different ways of doing things. But our ultimately, our goal is to look back at, okay, is this tradition scriptural? One, if it's based on scripture, fantastic. Second, does it contradict scripture? You can have a tradition that's not directly scriptural as long as it doesn't contradict scripture.

Shea Houdmann

But then as Kevin was pointing out, it's over the years, a tradition that starts out helpful, if it's built upon, built upon, built upon, expanded, expanded, expanded, eventually gets to the point it's not even recognizable for what it originally was. And then at that point, it actually does contradict scripture. And that's where the Protestant church, the Evangelicals are just like, no, these traditions are not in agreement with scripture. Therefore, we reject them.

Jeff Laird

And just to insert a point here is, again, we're avoiding caricature and cartoon, is that that tether idea is part of it. The flip side of the caricature is that the Catholic church was doing things the same way for 1500 years. And then one day, Martin Luther woke up and went, Oh, all of this has always been wrong. And that's not true, just the same way that Catholic doctrines shifted and moved over time. The resistance to that grew over time. It was not that Martin Luther was the first person to ever question this. Through the whole history of the Catholic church, you see what we call the pre-reformers who are saying, wait a minute, we're drifting in this direction, we're moving here. That doesn't seem to work. That doesn't seem to make sense.

Jeff Laird

The reason the Reformation happened was basically it got to the point where that cord between those who said the church has the authority and people who said, I think we're getting away from scripture, it finally got tight enough to snap, where the two sides just could no longer decide to be associated with each other anymore.

Jeff Laird

So again, we want to avoid this idea that somebody somewhere is talking about rapid, immediate change, just on the basis of whatever. So even in looking at how these doctrines have changed and how Protestants have objected to them, we still see we're talking about development. We're talking

about one side saying we need to stick close to something, and we're drifting from it, and another side saying we're not drifting from anything because our anchor point is this thing that's coming along with us.

Kevin Stone

We've alluded to this point a couple times here, I think, but just to kind of restate it, we all have traditions, right? I think of Christmas traditions that we have, birthday traditions, as we celebrate a person and thank God for their lives, and these types of traditions are wonderful things, and our lives are enriched because of them. In the case of the Christmas traditions, our worship of the Lord is enriched and enhanced many times because of the decor and the meditative nature of the Christmas season. And then my church has traditions. My church is about the least liturgical church that you could find, and yet we do have traditions. I had a past week, and I have a certain formula that I use when I'm talking with the person prior to baptism. I ask certain questions. I say certain words as I'm performing the baptism. Same thing with communion. I have a certain order of service that I follow, and, you know, these are traditions, and there's nothing wrong with them. There's nothing wrong with tradition in and of itself. Tradition is not a dirty word, and ruts can be good. Sometimes people say, well, we're getting into a rut. Well, ruts can be good.

Kevin Stone

I live on the Santa Fe Trail. I mean, literally, my house is on the Santa Fe Trail, or what used to be the Santa Fe Trail. So, you go just a half a mile outside of town either direction, and you'll find wagon wheel ruts in the ground. They've been there for how long? A hundred years or so, but they're still there. They're still visible. These are the marks that were left by people who went before us, and their ruts are there because this road was chosen for a good reason. It was the best road to take. It was the most convenient road to take. It was the most efficient, and so everybody just went that same way. There was no need, really, to blaze a new trail because you've got one marked out for you, and that's the tradition. And so, hundreds and hundreds of wagons pass that way, and with each wagon that passes, the ruts get a little bit deeper. The tradition gets a little bit stronger, but again, those are good tracks. That showed the best way to get to Santa Fe.

Kevin Stone

Now, if that trail had proved to be dangerous or another way proved to be better, then by all means, that'd be the time to break a new path. But in the meantime, we just follow the path that has been laid down by those who have gone before us.

Kevin Stone

With Scripture, then, in the church life, we follow these traditions as they have been handed down from the apostles, as they have been anchored to God's Word, until they're proven wrong. I would like to think that in our church, if we're doing something a certain way because that's the way we've always done it because of tradition, but it proves to be wrong, it proves to be unscriptural, I would like to think that we would be able to change that and glorify God in the process, because all tradition needs to come under the authority of God and His Word.

Jeff Laird

Right, and as the parallel for that when it comes to this magisterium idea, and again, we're not oversimplifying. Every analogy, every metaphor, every parable has its limits. But if you can imagine that those wagon tracks, those ruts, at one point start to move into dangerous ground, dangerous territory, the magisterium tradition concept would say, this has to be the right way. This must be the right way. Sure, it goes through four rivers. Sure, it goes straight up a cliff. Yeah, there's jaguars and all sorts of stuff over here that we have to worry about. But those ruts are there, therefore, those must be the right one.

Jeff Laird

Whereas the sola scriptura idea says there's something above and beyond the way we have done things or chosen to do things. Sure, the way we have always done it, there's a very good reason to trust that. Absolutely, categorically, we should trust things that Christians have said and done for a long time. But what we can't do is just look down at the ruts and say, but it's the rut. It must be right because it's the rut. At some point in time, we appeal to a higher authority, a compass, a trail guide, et cetera, et cetera, to say, you know what? I know everybody's going this way, but this is kind of stupid. We need to turn and go this way.

Jeff Laird

So again, these are all coarse and these are all broad, but they're, like you said right in the very beginning, Shea, there is a fundamental difference in where authority is anchored. And that is the ultimate disagreement between all of the Protestant and Catholic issues is essentially just that, is what is that anchor point? What's that last link in the chain from truth to us?

Shea Houdmann

Excellent, both of you. I'm trying to think of the best way to summarize all that is that the Protestant evangelical church, we shouldn't communicate that we are opposed to tradition because we're not, but we're opposed to unbiblical traditions or traditions that rise to the level where they are viewed as having

the same authority as Scripture. That's part of the key difference on the tradition aspect.

Shea Houdmann

There's two other issues I just wanted to cover briefly before we sign off here, questions related to Scripture that we often get from Catholics. One would be the claim from Catholics that, well, the Roman Catholic church gave us the Bible, so therefore it has authority over the Bible. It's like, well, Scripture says that Scripture is God breathed, like literally breathed out from God. God is the one who gave us the Bible. There was a process in which God convinced the early church which books actually belong in the Bible, but in no sense did the Roman Catholic church give us the Bible. The Roman Catholic church wasn't even, didn't even exist in the early church councils when they were deciding this. No one viewed the Bishop of Rome as supreme in these early church councils where they were deciding the scripture. So no. The Catholic as in the universal early church was used by God to give us scripture to identify which sixty-six books belonged in the Bible. But in no sense the Roman Catholic church give us the Bible.

Shea Houdmann

The second one which is a caricature, similar to what you were taking about earlier Jeff, is that well if you don't have a Pope, if every Christian has the same authority in interrupting scripture then you end up with a billion Popes instead of one. But well granted one of the problems with the Protestant church over the past several centuries is how many divisions there are and how many people go off and come up with fanciful interruptions of scripture and start new churches and denominations. In that case it does lead to chaos. But none of that should be the case because if you were actually basing your beliefs on scripture that wouldn't happen. So many of these divisions were caused by unscriptural beliefs and practices.

Shea Houdmann

And further, the Bible points us very clearly to Pastors, elders, deacons, bishops, who are our leaders. Who we are to submit to and learn from, and be disciplined by. So this idea that every Christian can be their own lone wolf, their own solo Christian, be out on their own deciding here's all the beliefs of the church that I am going to except. Here's parts of scripture I'm going to emphasize. That is not an authority that God has not given to any person let alone every person. No there is a church history councils. There are creeds. There are things that we look back on and see how doctrines have developed and we accept them as long as they are given with scripture. We don't seek to reinvent the wheel and come up with systems of doctrine and theology entirely on our own. Christianity is a community of believers we decide these

things together with scripture as our ultimate authority. But also with each other as checks and balances. This idea, this wish of the thirty thousand protestant denominations is the one that agrees with the Bible.

Shea Houdmann

That's another strong argument because well, the one thing that all thirty thousand protestant denominations agree on is that the Roman Catholic church is wrong on all these important issues. So yes, we many disagree on how often should communion be practiced? Or what's the best form of baptism? Or this or that or the other thing. But what we agree on are the essentials. What we agree on is salvation by grace alone through faith alone, by Christ alone. And the authority of scripture in all these things. We agree on the core, the essentials. What our disagreements on, which we are divided over are often and very sadly are the side issues. So I just wanted to cover those. Those are so often what we hear from Roman Catholics when we start talking about Scriptures are the authority is some of the problems that have come from that but we would say those problems have come from a wrong application of sola scriptura and not sola scriptura itself.

Jeff Laird

And again, and you made a very important point that, we talk about that tether idea, you know the thirty thousand denominations is a little disingenuous because the differences in doctrine between those denominations generally speaking are significantly less important than the developments that we see in Catholic theology over time. So it's well stated to say that the Roman Catholic church was not the church the people were dealing with. That developed into what it is. That divide widened over time. Yes, Protestant denominations disagree but Christians tend to recognize when you go too far. We have groups like Jehovah's Witnesses or Later Day Saints, that's where you see quote on quote Protestant Christians going wait, hang on. Stop. That is not correct. Now you've moved outside the grounds of where we've got some room to move. Good distinction. Important things for us to remember there.

Shea Houdmann

I hope this conversation today points you to like the core difference between Protestantism, Evangelicalism, and Catholicism and that's the source of authority. We believe here at Got Questions in the authority of Scripture. That Scripture is the absolute authority for faith and practice. There is room for traditions but only traditions that are built on and in full agreement with Scripture. And that's where we think Roman Catholic church goes astray in elevating tradition and elevating decrees of church leadership to the same authority of scripture which results in three sources of authority that can contradict each other and then basically what we believe is that thousand

years has to be true and that's not something protestants are willing to do. We get to go back to Scripture again, and again, and again as our source of authority.

Shea Houdmann

So Jeff, Kevin thank you again for this conversation today. Looking forward to continuing this series. And again please hear, our goal is to speak the truth in love. We may be expressing strong and serious disagreement with Catholicism. Some of it's doctrine and practices but nothing but love for Catholics. Nothing but desire for them to understand the beauty of what the salvation that Christ has provided and the joy of having scripture as the authority that we can fully and forever rely upon. Hope this conversation has been helpful to you. This has been part one on our series on Roman Catholicism. Got questions? The Bible has answers and we'll help you find them.