

THE GOSPEL OF

JOHN

Don't Worry,
Be Happy

INTRODUCTION

John 14:1-14

The disciples are being forced to deal with the coming death of Jesus. The night before Jesus' crucifixion has been set aside for him to prepare them for life after the cross. He tells them he's leaving, and they cannot follow where he's going. They are confused. Simon Peter in chapter 13 and Thomas and Philip in chapter 14 pepper him with questions, trying to cut through the haze that has descended on them. His departure is also met with resistance. Peter proclaims his undying allegiance to Jesus, in effect saying Jesus is wrong and they will follow him wherever he goes.

The overwhelming response is not confusion or resistance. It's anxiety. Jesus begins chapter 14 by acknowledging the disciples' feelings. He understands his announcement is causing their hearts to be "troubled" (v. 1). Earlier in the Gospel of John, this same word troubled is used to describe what happened to a pool of water; it's translated "stirred up" (5:7). The disciples' hearts are stirred up. Like ingredients in a mixing bowl, doubt, confusion, uncertainty, and fear are being stirred around inside their hearts. This potent mixture of emotions is motivated by Jesus' departure. How can he leave them? Why can't they follow him? You take those questions and add them to the fact that one disciple will betray him and another will deny him, and you have a recipe for anxiety strong enough to paralyze the most mature disciple.

In this emotionally trying moment, Jesus comforts the disciples.¹

OPEN IT

1. What is your go to "comfort food"?

¹ Carter, Matt; Wredberg, Josh. Exalting Jesus in John (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) (p. 302). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

READ IT

John 14:1-14

EXPLORE IT

2. **What command does Jesus give His disciples in this conversation?**
3. **What comfort does Jesus offer His disciples as it relates to His leaving?**
4. **What will those who believe in Jesus do?**
5. **What assurance does Jesus offer His disciples in their prayers?**

APPLY IT

When Jesus said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled,” he used a picturesque word. The idea is, “Don’t let your heart shudder.” In the preceding chapter, in verse 21, the same word was used to describe Jesus’ emotion as Judas went astray. It is a strong word, and he was saying specifically to the disciples (especially in light of the imminent cross), “It may look like your world is falling in and all is lost and the darkness is going to engulf you, but don’t let your heart be troubled.” Then he explained how to do this: “Trust in God; trust also in me.” The way to have an untroubled heart is to believe in God and believe in Jesus. That is all there is to it. The tenses tell us, “Keep on believing in God. Keep on believing in me.” If we would keep in mind the attributes of God — his sovereignty, his omniscience, his omnipotence — our hearts would not be troubled like they often are.²

6. **What are your thoughts in response to the statement above: “The way to have an untroubled heart is to believe in God and believe in Jesus. That is all there is to it.”?**

² Hughes, R. Kent. John: That You May Believe (Preaching the Word). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

7. Why do you think Jesus offers believing/trusting in Him as the antidote for His disciples' troubled hearts? What role do you think calling other Christ-followers to believe and trust in God and Jesus has in ministering to them in their anxiousness and worry today?

8. What things commonly cause your heart to be troubled? How does your theology (understanding of who God is) moderate those feelings of anxiousness or worry?

Jesus' claim to be the way, the truth, and the life, the only way to the Father, confronts our postmodern era in two ways: First, there is such a thing as absolute truth in the spiritual realm; second, Jesus only is the absolute truth; all other ways are wrong. People today don't have a problem if you say that Jesus is a way to God or that you personally believe in Him, as long as you don't say that all other beliefs are false. But when you claim that Jesus is the exclusive way to God; that He is the only spiritual truth, so that all other beliefs are false; and that He alone can impart eternal life—you will be accused of being intolerant and arrogant!

R. C. Sproul (in *Tabletalk*, date unknown) points out that the notion that all religions are valid is logically impossible because, if all religions are valid, then Christianity is valid. But Jesus said that He is the only way to God, which eliminates all other ways. So either He was right or He was wrong. Sproul concludes, "If He was wrong, then Christianity has no validity at all. If He was right, then there is no other way."³

9. What role does logic and reasoning play in the Church's witness to Christ?

³ Cole, Steven. Sermon found at <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-75-comfort-troubled-hearts-john-141-11>

10. What does it look like for the Church to uphold both truth and love in its witness to the lost world?

11. How would you respond to someone who shared that they felt that either you personally, or at least Christians in general, were intolerant because of the belief that Jesus is the only way?

At this final stage of his earthly ministry, Jesus is still confronting the root problem of his followers' relationship with him: their unbelief. This is confirmed by the other gospels, which reveal that building his disciples' faith was one of Jesus's key objectives (e.g., Matt. 17: 17– 21; Mark 11: 22– 24). To this end, Jesus envisions a relationship with his disciples as intimate as the one he himself enjoys with God the Father. ⁴

12. Where do you see unbelief in your own life and walk with God? In what ways have you seen God address unbelief in your life?

⁴ Köstenberger, Andreas J.. Encountering John (Encountering Biblical Studies) (pp. 268-269). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

13. How would you describe your current relationship with Jesus? How can you continue to be taking steps to deepen your relationship with Jesus today?

At the apex of their distress, the disciples could remember this promise from Jesus: “You will be with me where I am.” That promise sustained Abraham as he left his own country and looked for a new city. It was on the lips of David as he wrote: “You reveal the path of life to me; in your presence is abundant joy; at your right hand are eternal pleasures” (Ps 16:11). When an aged Peter took pen in hand to encourage suffering disciples, he reminded them of this promise: The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little while. To him be dominion forever. Amen. (1 Pet 5:10-11) The presence of Jesus is the promise that sustains us in the midst of difficulties. Like the disciples, we need to cling to the words of Jesus as our hope and our confidence while we walk through this fallen, sin-plagued world. ⁵

14. How does your anticipation of eternity with Jesus in heaven influence your life today?

⁵ Carter, Matt; Wredberg, Josh. Exalting Jesus in John (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) (p.308). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

We can say with confidence that in John 14:12a Jesus means that all believers will be marked by this: they will be so united to Jesus that they will carry on his work by his power and do the kinds of things that will “bear witness” about Jesus. They will point people to Jesus, and through Jesus to the Father. ⁶

15. Take a moment to consider how you see each of the following bearing witness about Jesus:

Myself:

My small group:

My church:

The Global Church:

⁶ Piper, John. Sermon found at <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/doing-the-works-of-jesus-and-greater-works>

John Piper argues that instead of using prayer as a wartime walkie-talkie to call in supplies for the battle, we have turned it into an intercom to ask for more comforts in the den (Let the Nations be Glad ([Baker Academic], p. 49). But prayer isn't a means of getting God to give us what we want so that our lives can be more comfy. Rather, prayer is the means by which we ask God to extend His kingdom and do His will on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10). True, there is a place to ask God to meet our needs. But the center of all that we pray should be, "Lord, do Your work through Your people! Bring sinners to genuine conversion! Sanctify Your people so that we will be faithful representatives of Jesus on earth!"

So in prayer, we are to submit to God's will and to ask Him to accomplish His will through us and through His people. But, the difficulty is, how do we determine what God's will is so that we pray in line with it? ⁷

16. How would you answer that question: "How do we determine what God's will is so that we pray in line with it?"

17. Do you feel we place a strong emphasis on prayer as a church? How could the church facilitate and encourage more "wartime" prayer?

⁷ Cole, Steve. Sermon found at <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-76-doing-greater-works-jesus-john-1412-14>
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