

John Chapter 14

The disciples have spent the last few years walking with Jesus and listening to his teachings. Now, as their time with him in his earthly body is coming to an end, he wants to make sure they understand how intricately connected he is with the Father--that seeing him is the same as seeing the Father.

This is an integral part of the incarnation and the disciples have clearly not made that connection yet. Knowing that Thomas will be the one to insist upon seeing the risen Jesus for himself in a matter of days, it's no surprise that he is the one to first express his confusion. It's always good to have someone in the group who is willing to ask the questions everyone else is too scared to ask.

So, Jesus answers the questions that are likely on everyone's minds and explains that he is God in the flesh and that he has been speaking for, and speaking as, God all along. After all this time, the disciples haven't come to fully understand this truth, but that doesn't mean they haven't experienced it.

Through the things they have heard Jesus say and all the things they've seen him do, they have seen the Father in their midst and they have a better understanding about him through their connection with Jesus. They might not realize what has been happening until this very moment, but that doesn't change the fact that they have experienced it firsthand.

The same can be said of the people we interact with every day. We live every day of our lives in a place God has intentionally sent us, a place he wants to bless and redeem through us. Through us, people around us can come to know Jesus. They can learn about his character and his love from the things he does through us.

We don't have to worry if the people in our lives don't recognize this yet. They will. Remember that Jesus has been with the disciples for three years, and they are just now starting to understand. Take comfort in that, and in knowing you don't have to rush things. God has a plan, and his timing is always perfect.

It is also important to remember this when we pray. God answers every prayer we send his way. Even, if you have a prayer in mind that has not been answered, be patient. Either, you haven't recognized or accepted the answer, or the answer is still on its way. We tend to expect immediate results in everything. Maybe it is because of our modern culture of instant gratification. Microwaves, fast food, and high-speed internet are all a part of that. Or, maybe it is just an aspect of being human. However, God gives us answers in his timing.

Sometimes God's answers aren't exactly what we are hoping for. To ask for things in Jesus' name does not simply mean to add "in Jesus' name" to the end of any request we have of God. Has this phrase become just a way of signing off when you pray? Or, is everything you pray for truly about God's glory and furthering his purposes? When we pray for one outcome, and God gives us another, it doesn't mean we were wrong to ask in the first place. It simply means God has a better plan. One where we don't know all

the details, but we can take comfort in knowing that God will use our prayers to strengthen our faith and make his kingdom known.

Now, as you can probably imagine, the disciples are a bit worried about all this talk about Jesus leaving them. They've been following his lead for the last three years, and they don't want him to go. How will they know what to do? Who will give them guidance and teach them? What if they forget everything he has taught them?

So, Jesus addresses their concerns. He tells them not to worry about memorizing everything he said verbatim. You don't have to dwell on dotting every "i" and crossing every "t." There is already a plan for that, and it is even better than having Jesus walking around with us. The Holy Spirit helps us remember everything that Jesus said, and this should ease our burden. There's nothing wrong with being able to list off chapter and verse numbers for some of our favorite passages, but isn't it comforting to know that the Holy Spirit will bring God's words to our memory when we need them? All Jesus' followers now have a constant connection with Jesus in a way that was not possible when he as a single man walking the earth.

It is important to keep in mind that the Holy Spirit doesn't help us remember Jesus' teachings without a purpose. He is not our secret weapon for winning Bible Jeopardy. Jesus reinforces the idea that those who love him choose to keep his commandments. Don't confuse the order. He doesn't say "Keep my word to prove you are worthy of the Father's love." He says our love for him will make us want to keep his word. And the Holy Spirit is always with us to help with that.

What is your motivation for obeying the commands of the Bible? Is it to please God and prove your worthiness? Or, maybe to show off for other Christians? Some of us do it to make sure the outside world knows we live by different standards. But, hopefully the primary motivation for our obedience is in response to the love we have been shown. Take some time to examine your heart on this matter.