

In Him is Life *The Gospel of John*

Relating With Jesus by His Word and His Spirit *John 14:22 – 26*

The Hiddenness of Jesus

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Relationship with Jesus by His Word and His Spirit

²³ Jesus answered and said to him,

‘If anyone loves me,
 he will keep my word,
 and my Father will love him,
 and we will come to him,
 and make Our abode with him.

²⁴ He who does not love me,
 does not keep my words
 and the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father’s who sent me.

The New Teacher: The Spirit Teaches the Word

²⁵ These things I have spoken to you
 while abiding with you.

²⁶ But the Helper,
 the Holy Spirit,
 whom the Father will send in my name,
 will teach you all things,
 and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

Introduction: How Jesus Speaks to Us

How do we relate to Jesus? How does he speak to us? How does he communicate with us? I want to tell you a story about a young man who wondered this. He was one of my four roommates the year after I graduated from college. I lived in a crowded house of 5 guys at 307 College Avenue. One chilly night in early 1995, the phone rang and it was the emergency room of Stanford hospital. My roommate had been in a bike crash. He had been found by a guy on the side of the road who brought him in to the emergency room. To this day, we still don’t know what happened. Jake* had limited amnesia and didn’t remember how it happened. So Jake looked back on that bike accident and he realized that he could have died. He started asking the question, ‘Maybe there is a God, and maybe He’s trying to get my attention!’ He wondered if God was trying to communicate to him through his circumstances. But, of course, he wasn’t convinced. So he continued to just think about it. A few months later, we were talking and I asked him, ‘Why haven’t you given your life to Jesus Christ?’ He said, ‘I’m still waiting for more personal evidence.’ I asked him, ‘What do you mean?’ He said, ‘Well, I pray...not that often, admittedly... that God would reveal Himself to me somehow by my circumstances.’ Now, I had been studying John 14, this very passage, at that time, and Jesus Christ in me decided to take a little gamble. He said through me, ‘I don’t think you can trust your circumstances to reveal to you who God is, because you can interpret your circumstances any way you want, and you know that you’ll never be intellectually honest with yourself if you decide anything that way. Furthermore, God has told us how He communicates. It’s by what He says. Why don’t you study and listen to what He has already SAID?’

Where did I get the nerve to say that? Right here. I was studying John 14. How does Jesus Christ communicate? By his word. If you want to know Jesus, don’t wait for what you think are the right circumstances (like surviving a bike accident)! Think hard about what He has already SPOKEN. Listen to His WORDS!

Context:

We are in a large banquet room on the second story of a home in Jerusalem. Jesus is leaving. He is eating his last supper with his disciples the night before he is to hang on the cross. To the apostle John, this may very well be the most important conversation in the history of the world. John was recording this as the last elder statesman of Christianity. The conversations, the themes, and the ideas he writes here may be the most important things Jesus ever said.

Jesus is talking about the Spirit. Philip just asked Jesus to reveal God the Father. Jesus said that the Son reveals the Father. Then after me, the Spirit in the disciples, will reveal the Father through them, in their own lives.

The Hiddenness of Jesus

At this point, another disciple perks his ears up: Jude Thaddeus. He's understood part of Jesus' main message: after me. What strikes him is that Jesus is leaving. Look at v.22. Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, 'Lord, what then has happened that you are going to disclose yourself to us, and not to the world?'

(Now, we don't know very much about this particular disciple. He could have been one of the seventy, outside the twelve, but if he was one of the apostles, his alternate name must have been Thaddaeus, a name rooted in the Hebrew word for 'heart'.)

Maybe this Judas thinks that Jesus is going to hide himself away like Howard Hughes in some room and be secretive and mysterious. He definitely thinks that there's going to be a change in the way Jesus relates to people. If a friend of yours was going to move to a different country, you might ask, 'How does this impact our friendship? How are we going to keep in touch?' So Judas asks this question, 'Lord, what then has happened that you are going to disclose yourself to us, and not to the world?'

Relating to Jesus by His Word: v. 23 – 24

Jesus then gives what I at first thought was the most evasive answer I've ever read in the Gospels. He first sets up a binary condition. He says, 'He who loves me keeps my word' in v.23 and in v.24 he says, 'he who does not love me does not keep my word'. That sounds a little cryptic, doesn't it? I have to admit that for the longest time, I wondered, 'Is Jesus really answering Judas' question?' Well, let's break this down.

We either love him or we don't, and that's reflected by whether or not we keep his word. You can tell by the way Jesus organizes his thoughts here, there are no other combinations and there are no middle conditions. Loving Jesus is synonymous with keeping his word.

Now what does this mean, to keep his word? A person like Leo Tolstoy or Thomas Jefferson would have interpreted this to mean the commandments of Jesus. To them, what's really important in Christianity is the moral and ethical teachings. But is that what it means to keep Jesus' word? I don't think so. If it were, Jesus would have used the word *entole*, the word for commandment. But he used the word *logon*.

Essentially, I think the word was Jesus' supreme form of communication because by his word, he could describe two things: who he is and what kind of relationship he wants. There are at least five types of relationships we can have with Jesus Christ, all of which depend on our understanding of who he is.

The first relationship is *human to human*. The disciples, the Pharisees, and even Jesus' family all believed at some point that Jesus was an ordinary human being. They looked at his physical body, saw his face, his eyes, his beard, and they said, 'He doesn't glow. He's just a man!' They just LOOKED at him and rejected what he SAID.

The second relationship is *magician to audience*. Remember back in John 6, Jesus multiplied bread for five thousand people. Jesus left, and they followed...all the way to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, asking for seconds. 'Can I have more of that bread?!' What might we expect? Is Jesus happy that people are coming to him for whatever reason? No. The Lord says, 'No miracle. Because you need to understand that I don't want just a magician to audience relationship with you. I am the real bread of life. You need to partake of me and come into a relationship of faith in me.' Miracles were never a clear form of communication, because it was based on LOOKING, not on HEARING.

The third relationship is *example to imitator*. We could look at Jesus' outward actions and have an example to imitator relationship with him. He's our example, we imitate him in everything. In this case, we'd be just like those

guys in Matthew 7:21-27, who come to Jesus saying, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we drive out demons in your name, just like you? Didn't we DO everything we SAW you doing?' And Jesus will say, 'Depart from me, I never knew you. I only know those who build their life on my words, which is like building a house on a rock.' Again, the example to imitator relationship is false because it's based on LOOKING, not HEARING.

The fourth relationship is *victim to bystander*. We could look at the cross and we'd think he was some tragic victim, some misplaced criminal, and we'd want no real relationship with him with him at all. This is a conclusion based on LOOKING, not HEARING.

Notice that all four of those relationships are based on *sight*. People look at Jesus and make some kind of conclusion about him. The problem is: nothing is obvious by just looking at Jesus. With Jesus, sight is misleading.

So the fifth type of relationship is not based on sight. It's based on *hearing*. This relationship is the *indwelling Savior to sinful human* relationship. He says this right here in v.23: 'If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him.' Essentially, Jesus is referring to the Spirit coming into the believer. This is the relationship Jesus wanted. This type of relationship Jesus could only communicate by his word and not by his actions. It starts with his identity and our identity and the kind of interaction we need to have with him.

We do something similar when we say to our parents, 'I don't want to relate to you as a child to a parent relationship, but as an adult to an adult,' you are saying something about them and yourself and the kind of relationship you want. Jesus did the same thing. There are certain things about relationships, and our relationship with God in particular, that can only be communicated by words.

Let's say we're playing Charades. In Charades, you have to communicate a message, but you can't talk. You can only gesture. Now if I asked you to communicate 'cat,' you can act like a cat. [act like a cat] Now if I asked you to communicate 'the Holy Spirit,' how do you do that? If you had to communicate, 'You are thirsty and need a glass of water,' you can act thirsty. But if you had to communicate, 'You have a spiritual thirst and you need a Savior,' how do you do that? It's very hard! You see, there is a whole realm of life that cannot be described except by words: the spiritual realm and the relational realm. You cannot just use gestures because gestures and actions are not clear enough. You've got to use words.

For that reason, Jesus didn't play Charades. He spoke. He wants us to believe specific things about him and specific things about ourselves, and therefore he wants to have a specific relationship with us: the indwelling Savior to sinful human relationship. That is why we need to keep his word. We have to 'guard' his word, just like the Philippian jailer 'guarded' Paul and Silas (Acts 16:23). That's the same word there. Denying his words is creating a fake Jesus and relating to him in a way that he doesn't want to be related to. If anyone loves me, he will guard my word.

What happens, then, when we approach Jesus by his word? Look at v.23. 'My father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him.' What is Jesus saying? This is another way of saying that the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts. And this is how God wants to relate to us. First, He gave His Shekinah glory to be the heart and soul of the nation Israel in the Tabernacle. Second, He lived in the golden Temple of Solomon. He said through Isaiah, 'Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? And where is a place where I may rest? To this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit and who trembles at my word.' (Isa.66:1-2) Then, He came in bodily form in Jesus Christ. Why? *To defeat the corruption of human nature in his body, so that he could share his Spirit with us and start to defeat the corruption of human nature in us.*

You see, everything before Jesus, from God's perspective, was the appetizer. Jesus is the main course! God has yearned for this kind of relationship: the indwelling Savior, the 'I am yours.' God's always been looking for human hearts to dwell in. This is why Jesus could make the claim of authority in the next verse: 'He who does not love me, does not keep my words, and the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me' (v.24). Jesus was only recapitulating everything that God said before, through Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, and others about the indwelling Spirit. God has always wanted to relate to us this way. This is what the entire Scriptures is moving towards and now Jesus is on the verge of it.

Conclusions About the Word and the Spirit

Now let's start to make conclusions. First, Jesus' word and Jesus' Spirit cannot be separated. Ever. So often we think about the Spirit as the result of emotion. No. The Spirit comes as the result of us agreeing to a special relationship where we are sinners and he is the Savior, where we understand who Jesus is and what he is about. John the Baptist in John 3:34, 'He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure.' And Jesus himself says in John 6:63, 'The Spirit gives life...the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.'

Second, Jesus' word is the only way we can live by the Holy Spirit. You see, there is a tight correlation between the WORD, HEARING, FAITH, and the HOLY SPIRIT IN US, just like there is a correlation between SIGHT, MISINTERPRETATION, MISCOMMUNICATION, and MISUNDERSTANDING.

Third, it's not that sight itself is wrong, but you need faith beforehand in order to see properly, and seeing and interpreting miracles is helpful ONLY AFTER you've listened to the word. When Jesus multiplied the bread, he did it as a symbol that he is the bread that we need to eat him (metaphorically) and have him inside us by his Spirit. The miracle was the outward physical symbol of an inward spiritual reality. Only after you've listened and responded with faith can you see and understand the miracle for that Jesus truly intended.

The fourth conclusion is that we can understand the main concern of the apostle John. What was his purpose in writing down these words of Jesus? It was in teaching all Christians of all later generations how to relate to Jesus. John was the last elder statesman of Christianity. He is the last who saw him eat, drink, and sleep. And I'm sure everyone came to him to ask, 'Can I know Jesus like you?' John's answer is YES. First by his word, and then by his Spirit. You don't have to have seen him.

The fifth conclusion is surprising: We have as much good information about Jesus as the apostles did!!! Having Jesus physically present didn't give them an advantage over us. So often, Christians sometimes think, 'If only Jesus were physically here, then I'd have more faith like the disciples had faith.' But that is not true. Having Jesus physically present didn't convince them – look at all the people who didn't believe him back then! And it doesn't matter for us.

I'm going to belabor the point. Let's take the entire Gospel of John. The entire Gospel of John is patterned to put down sight. The two bookends are in chapter 1, 'No one has seen God,' and in chapter 20, 'blessed are they who do not see, and yet believe.' In between, Jesus' physical presence and miracles get in the way of his real message. No one makes a correct conclusion about Jesus based on sight. Nicodemus in John 3 says, 'We saw you do miracles. You're a teacher.' (3:2) Jesus says, 'No, I'm more than a teacher. You are a teacher. I'm the Son of God.' Then the woman at the well in John 4 sees Jesus and says, 'Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.' Jesus says, 'No, I'm more than a prophet. I'm the Messiah.' In John 6, the hungry crowd sees him do miracles and says, 'You are the Prophet, the magician-king.' And they wanted him to create bread all the time. Jesus says, 'No, I am more than a miracle worker. I am the bread of life. You need to partake of me and have me inside you.' In John 7, Jesus' own family looks at him and did not believe. In John 8, the Pharisees look at Jesus and say, 'You are not yet fifty years old' and they don't believe. Then in John 9, we have the best example. A blind man gets healed by Jesus. You'd think this is the chance for sight to be important, right? But no. The blind man comes back and sees Jesus face to face. Jesus says, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' The man says, 'Who is he, that I may believe in him?' Sight was not enough. Seeing Jesus was not enough. So Jesus had to say to him, 'He is the one who is talking with you.' THEN AND ONLY THEN does that man believe. Only one person approaches Jesus by sight: Thomas in chapter 20. 'I need to see his wounds and touch him!' he said. And he does, but he gets rebuked! Jesus says, 'Thomas, because you have seen me have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.'

On the other hand, those who do come to Jesus and get the Holy Spirit do so by his word. Jesus says in John 10, 'My sheep hear my voice.' The Samaritan woman at the well finally accepts Jesus' word without a miracle. And she gets her living water, the Spirit. There you see the word and the Spirit intertwined again.

Let's step back one step further. The entire Gospel of John is patterned after the Creation account in Genesis. In John 20, you have Jesus breathing into the disciples, saying, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' It's just like God breathing his life into Adam and making him alive. In John 1, you have God speaking by His Word. In Genesis 1, you have speaking by His Word. Then throughout all of John, you have 7 miracles, 7 discourses, and 7 'I AM' statements. Why seven? Because there were seven days in Creation. John's Gospel portrays Jesus as God speaking forth the

New Creation. And how did God bring forth life in Genesis. His Spirit brooded, and He spoke His Word. How does Jesus bring forth new life in John? By his Spirit and his word.

Let's step back even one step further. Let's look at the entire Bible. Throughout the entire Bible, you find one theme: God's Life comes by His Word and His Spirit. All physical life began by the Word and the Spirit. Then there's the life of the nation Israel. Where did God want His people to be centered? Around His Spirit, the Shekinah glory, the shining presence of God either in the Tabernacle or the Temple. And what did God want His people to listen to? To His Word, as spoken by the prophets. The life of the nation Israel came by the Word and the Spirit. Now with Jesus, the spiritual life of the individual person is by the Word and the Spirit.

Now, let's step back to the Upper Room again, into Judas' shoes for just a second. His question was, 'Jesus, what then has happened that you will disclose yourself to us and not to the world?' That question is a hard one to answer because on the one hand, nothing is changing. Jesus has always revealed himself by his word, *so that we could hear and listen to him*. But on the other hand, Jesus is leaving and he's going to disclose himself by being in us by his Spirit. That is different. So Jesus answered, 'If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him.' What a beautiful answer. Jesus answered in 5 seconds what just took me 20 minutes!!

The Spirit, the New Teacher of the Word: v.25-26

Now, the natural question that arises for the disciples at this point is, 'Are we going to remember everything Jesus said? If Jesus is leaving, and if everything is built on his word, how will we remember the word?' Answer again: the Spirit.

These things I have spoken to you
while abiding with you.
But the Helper,
the Holy Spirit,
whom the Father will send in my name,
will teach you all things,
and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

This surprised me because I had always thought that the Spirit stimulates our emotions. But he also stimulates our intelligence. Makes sense, though, because the Spirit is a Person. And communication with a person is both emotional and intellectual. There is no dichotomy.

The Spirit would help the apostles understand and remember all Jesus said ON AN ONGOING, LIVING BASIS. This means two things. First, it authenticates the New Testament. The New Testament are the words of Jesus written or approved by the apostles. Second, it also provides us with a clue as to how the Spirit works in our lives. The Holy Spirit will do the same thing for us. He will take the Word and bring it to our remembrance. He will make it alive to us.

The view of the early church is that there was a body of truth, the words of Jesus. When you heard it, you breathed it in. Then, you let the Holy Spirit brood on it inside you. The Spirit and the Word together transformed you, because they made Jesus alive in you. Then you were able to breathe the words of Jesus out again, after you were transformed. Other people would hear, and they would breathe those words in, and Christianity spread. That is how the Word and the Spirit interacted in you. It's like Jesus at the wedding of Cana filling up the six water jars of humanity with the water of the word, and then transforming it into the good wine of the Holy Spirit. We'll talk more about that next week.

Conclusions

This means that if you are trying to find out more about Jesus, or if you have a friend that wants to find out more about Jesus, LISTEN TO WHAT HE SAID. Never look at whether you get parking spaces in crowded parking lots, or whether you win the lottery. Jesus communicates by speaking.

This may sound funny, but this section struck me so powerfully that it's changed the way I relate to children. When I moved into East Palo Alto, virtually every day, children ages 2 to 12 wanted to come in and play, dance, draw, or pillow fight. Let me tell you, nothing is as scary as having lots of kids around. I wondered, 'What do I do?' I

watched their families. The first thing I observed was how the parents communicated to their children. Not all, but many, of the parents grabbed their kids when they wanted the kids to come inside, even with children of age 9 and upwards. They pushed their kids and handheld them to get them to do things. I think as a consequence, the kids were always kind of immature. They didn't respond the first time they were asked. So I noticed this and decided that, as much as possible, I was going to exercise authority BY MY VOICE ALONE. Whenever the kids came into my place, I asked them, '¿Vas a escuchar a mi voz?' Will you listen to my voice? They would play around...if they got into fights in my place, or if they misbehaved, I would always first say to them again, 'Escucha a mi voz.' And if they didn't listen, I sent them out, or didn't allow them in the next time they wanted to come in, because they didn't listen to me. And I would tell them that that's why. For the most part, it's worked. I was amazed! The kids listen to my voice. Now, why do I do this? Is it just because I want to be listened to? Well, that's partly it, but not all. I want them to have this perspective on communication and relationship because one day, they'll be listening for the God who calls them by name, who speaks to them by His words. The Lord won't handheld them. He treats them with great respect and speaks to them. I want the kids to pay attention to my voice, so that hopefully one day, they'll pay attention to the JESUS' VOICE.