
Most of you know that I have what I like to call a genetic defect and that is that I have no natural functioning directional system. I literally can get lost pretty much anywhere anytime and the funny thing is that I often do it with such confidence. You see I am usually not walking around all confused and freaking out (although that does happen from time to time) but I confidently move in a direction that just happens to be wrong most of the time. And the funny thing is that I have no idea I am going the wrong way until it is so obvious and in my face that I actually do start to panic and freak out. Sometimes I get lost just because I am not paying attention. I am driving somewhere talking on the phone and next thing you know I have no idea where I am or how to get to where I want to be. It is so annoying and frustrating to have this defect.

This is how I believe it is with most of us in terms of our connection to God. Often we confidently think we are “doing” it right, going the right direction and all the while we have veered onto the wrong path because we are still choosing to be our own way, our own truth, and our own life. Sometimes the directions we follow become confusing because so much of what we do is cloaked in good Christianity—Christian principles and behaviors; however even our behavior does not truly mask the fact that when we are out in the middle of now where, Jesus is not our “I Am.” Besides, before long it becomes very apparent how far we have walked from that place where we experience intimacy with Jesus. We become disoriented in our walk with God and we find that we are miserable, anxious, worried, sad, depressed, have no peace, and do not know which way to turn, and so on. That place, which we know so well, totally blows.

I know that there have been many times when I am trying to navigate around a big city and I find myself just flat out lost. In the midst of those big buildings there is nothing I can use to help orient myself. In that situation I usually have to call

someone and say help, get me out of here, get me home. So tonight is intended to be a bit like that and our study will be like our map home to ensure we don't get lost. I am going to remind you of the pivotal truths that we have studied and know oh so very well, but which we have had real difficulty applying. In fact, so little of what I am going to be say is going to be new. I know that most of you, except for the few that are new to Pathway Fellowship, could probably teach a lot of what I am going to be covering tonight. So knowledge is not the problem, but living it, walking it, and letting it become our reality is our ongoing and continual challenge.

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

As we discussed last week, if Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, then, obviously, you are not. In talking with many of you this week it became readily apparent how huge the struggle to live this really is. We know that Jesus is our "I Am." We have been taught this truth and have no problem with it conceptually. In fact, most of us have from time to time even experienced Jesus in this level of dependence and it was the safest most wonderful and peaceful place we have ever been. But still this is not a way of life that we *actively* and continually pursue. Most of us are too busy trying to navigate our own life dealing with our own issues, or we are just too busy dwelling on the "ME" and how everything impacts us, that we are not even aware that we are walking down the wrong path until God starts to press us in order to get our attention and wake us up from our malaise.

Last week we talked about how often we keep our head down and rarely lift it up to see what God is doing and where we need to be. But there is another dynamic that takes place which adds to the delusion that we can survive on our own and pretend to be our own way, our own truth, and our own life, and that is our Christianity. Most of us have learned to live with good Christian principles, behaviors, and practices. We read our Bibles, we hang out in our little community, we give godly advice to others, and we make sure everyone is doing ok. Face it we know how to “do” this Christian thing (we have been trained in all the intricacies); and, yet, so often it has nothing to do with experiencing God.

But if we are “doing” what we “believe” we are supposed to be doing we never really stop and look in the mirror and see if we can actually can see a reflection of our Father. In all honestly, however, I don’t think we fail to stop and look because we are truly, actually, fully deceived; rather, we probably sub-consciously don’t want to see what we know that will see when we stop and take a look in the mirror. So we tread really softly and creep down our little path hoping that God will not notice that we are way over here acting as our own way, truth, and life. After all, we don’t want Him to begin pressing in on us.

The delusion, however, that is induced by our Christian activity is very pervasive and something that the enemy is always encouraging. This idea that we might be “doing” it right because we are continuing to follow the expectations of our Christian surroundings actually dulls us into passivity—not in behavior mind you but in our willingness to *actively* be dependent upon the Lord for all things. And before you know it our spiritual protection, the spiritual armor that we must put on every day, is left lying on the floor as we leave the house to go and “do” life. This puts us in harm’s way as we now become an open target for the enemy to pounce on us and mess us up with a plethora of lies which further keeps us from

drawing near to the Lord. This is the inevitable result of living as if we are our own way, our own truth, and our own life; we become easy prey for the enemy.

I want you to write this next point down so you can refer to it all the time. The good news of Jesus Christ, the gospel, begins where you end. Let me say that again: the good news of Jesus Christ begins where you end. Too often we think of the gospel as just a message of salvation guaranteeing that we will spend eternity in heaven. That is an awesome promise but honestly it is only a small part of the gospel message. The good news is that Jesus will exchange His life for your life; an unbelievable experience that is to be yours here and now. But remember, His life begins where yours ends.

God is not on a mission to merge His life into your old life, His nature into your old nature; rather, He wants a complete exchange. God is not going to fix your old sinful nature and He will not do any of His “God” stuff to make it acceptable. He wants it gone out of the way entirely so He has the freedom to move and live in and through you. Remember, despite your religious behaviors, principles, and practices, your old nature is thoroughly corrupt and is an enemy of God. I know you all know this, but you have to believe it to be true and then live as if it is true. Paul said in *Romans 7:18*, we don’t have anything good that dwells within us, that is, within our flesh. That is why we must put absolutely no value or worth in our own ability to be our “I Am” and that is why all things have to be new!

The true gospel message is that you are not only unable, you are hopelessly inept and incapable of being the Lord of your life; thus, all has to come from Him—everything all the time! And the “extra” good news is that He has made provision for everything you need. Let’s go back to a pivotal truth from the book of Hebrews; a truth that we must always keep at the forefront of our minds:

Hebrews 11:6

And without faith it is impossible to please Him.

Impossible is an absolute word; not a lot of grey in that word. This means that if what you do, what you think, and what you feel does not derive from an absolute dependence upon Jesus—trusting that He is your way, your truth, and your life—then it is simply NOT pleasing to God in any way shape or form. And there is no exception for trying hard, for good intentions, or for doing “Christian” things. All parts of your life must derive from faith, from your *choice* to believe the truth about Jesus: that He is your “I AM” and you are not, that He is your way, your truth, and your life and you are not!

Here is another truism that I want you to write down. Faith is *always active* and never passive. Again, faith is *always active* and never passive. By active I am not talking about “doing” Christian things; the two concepts are not synonymous. By *active* I mean that you must apply the truth about your need to let Jesus be your “I Am” with every thought, with every action, with every feeling, and with every word that proceeds from your mouth. This is not something we can ever be passive about because if He is not *actively* Lord of our life, it means we are still actively lord of our own life. This is very binary truth and we have to be aware that there is no middle ground here. It is truly an either/or. Either your thoughts, feelings, words, and deeds derive from God living in you or they don’t!

This brings us to another verse that I know you are all familiar with but I want us to focus on the final tag line of this passage for it provides us a great warning.

Luke 5:37-39

"And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the new wine would burst the wineskins, spilling the wine and ruining the skins. New wine must be stored in new wineskins. But no one who drinks the old wine seems to want the new wine. 'The old is just fine,' they say."

In this parable, the wine is a metaphor for the Holy Spirit and the new wine skins are a metaphor for the new creation which Jesus imbues within our being when we become born again. The point is that God had to give you a new nature because your old sinful nature could not get the job done: it is corrupt, it is wicked, it is evil, and it is an enemy of God (*Romans 8:7; Galatians 5:17; James 4:4*). Thus, all has to be new! But notice what Jesus says in *verse 39*. Despite having access to the new wine, if you continue to drink the old wine—if you rest in your attempts to be your own “I Am”—believe me, you will find a way to be ok with the old and say that is fine. Look at your week, or just examine an average day, how comfortable and even satisfied are you drinking the old wine?

Another way to think about this is to consider who you are in God. Paul says that if any man is in Christ he is a new creation, the old has passed away and all has become new (*2 Corinthians 5:17*). This reference to “new” is the Greek word “*kainos*” which means new in nature as opposed to new in terms of time, which would be the word “*neo*.” This new nature is specifically to be understood in contrast to the old nature which has passed away or is now neglected. This means that each person who has been born again can actually live in this “*kainos*” and see through His eyes, feel with His heart, and think with His mind; it is entirely possible!

So ask yourself, do you see things in the way God sees things or is everything first filtered through your construct of life? Are you aware of what He is doing around your life and with those who are in your life? Do you see it; do you know how He is moving? Are you a part of the things God is doing? Do you care about the things He cares about? Do His passions and desires sweep over, dominate, and rule the thoughts you have of yourself. Do you grieve over the things He grieves over? Do you love those He loves? What about your thoughts? Are you obsessed with yourself (even if it is self-deprecating thoughts about how you did this wrong or how you did not handle that right, or how you wish you could be more like so and so)? Do you focus on the truth or do the lies of the enemy have free play in your mind?

If you don't see with His eyes, feel with His heart, think with His mind, then I hate to tell you but you are still your own way, your own truth, and your own life. You are still trying to be your "I Am" and you have found some level of personal resolve drinking the old wine thinking that this must just be how life is going to be which is why you can't wait to go to heaven and "be with Jesus." This is such a fundamental flaw and error in your thinking. If you have been born again, Jesus is with you now in the person of the Holy Spirit. He is right here and He is living in that "*kainos*" that Paul talked about. He is there desiring to fill you completely and live through you such that you can see what He sees, feel what He feels, and think as He thinks.

Having talked with many of you I know that most of us want to live in this new nature. In fact, we become very frustrated when we look around and realize that we really have no idea what God is doing and we recognize that we have been walking around with our head down, obsessed with ourselves, and have once again wound up on the wrong path. First of all, the fact that you are frustrated is good news

because if you were not frustrated then I would begin to really worry for it means you have become hard and callous. So frustration is a good sign. But as you know, every time we find ourselves down the wrong path and our intimacy with God is just not there, it is a direct result of either wrong belief or unbelief. So when you finally realize that you are not seeing from His eyes, feeling from His heart, or thinking with His mind, it is always good to do the forensics and trace your steps back to the point of where you first made a wrong turn.

Where was it that you first decided to trust yourself and not God? What was going on and what was the impetus to your decision? Were you afraid, were you reacting out of pride, or were you just negligent and not *active* in your pursuit of God? What was the enemy doing and how did he bring the temptation—what was the lie wrapped in? Was it wrapped in “good” religion or just a raw temptation of the flesh? And even more importantly, what piece of your spiritual armor did you either forget to put on or what piece did you take off and leave at home giving the enemy easy access to assault you with his lies?

Take the time and do the work; trace your steps and then do something—anything—to remind you never to walk down that path ever again. I have encouraged one person I am disciplining to actually put up signs in her room; signs that she can look at every day and every night to remind herself how the enemy likes to come after her and what his favorite attacks have looked like. I know it sounds cheesy and dumb, but hey whatever works. She puts up signs to remind her where she jumped off the path in the past so she will recognize that place and know never to walk that way again. The signs are like a road map so she can do the forensics on her own. You see, I want her to be able to see the attack coming and recognize it as the enemy’s handiwork before she gets duped by his lies.

It's a lot like what football and other sports teams do each week when they prepare for a game. They study the films of past games to know what offense their opposition runs and what defenses they run, and under what circumstances. They do this so they can recognize the play before it happens and respond effectively so they do not get caught off guard and trampled.

Too often, however, when we mess up and find ourselves on the wrong road we just try and push past it and move forward so we don't have to stare out how ridiculous we have been (especially if we are standing in the same spot we have occupied so many times in the past). But we need to get over our pride in this regard and just accept the truth: our old nature is, by definition, ridiculous; always has been and always will be. We just need to get over it; besides, we are all the same in this regard! So it is ok to stop, stare at what has happened and learn so you can guard and protect yourself and better recognize when you start to trust in yourself and not in God. If you are aware of what is happening there is a chance that you will be more apt to stop yourself in your tracks and reverse direction and make the choice of trusting God and ignoring the lies of the enemy. If you don't do the forensics, however, the enemy will be able to successfully run the same play against you time and time again and you will continually be frustrated with failure.

But let me give you a little hint. As you do the forensic work you will likely find a little trend. The enemy often comes after you with the same old lie that he has been spewing since the beginning: you can be like God. You can be your own way, your own truth, and your own life; really you can! You know what you're doing; go ahead and handle things.

We must be aware that this is the lie of all lies! We must be alert, and we must always be *active* and never passive in our willingness to trust God and listen only to His voice. We are in a war and the only way we will have ongoing victory is if

we see with God's eyes, feel with His heart, and think with His mind. This is our provision and it is a marvelous thing to behold when someone actually lives this way and continually drinks from the new wine!

I want to give you one more word picture to help drive home this concept of being *active* in our faith. Think of a spring loaded screen door. You know that if you don't hold it open, put a door stop in place, or lock it in an open position, it will just slam shut. This kind of describes the relationship with our old nature. If we are not *actively* pushing it back all the time, by trusting ourselves to Jesus, it will slam back shut on us and sometimes it happens so fast that we don't even have time to stop it; like when you're trying to bring groceries in the house and you end up dropping the bags while trying to squeeze in the door.

You see, being dependent upon Jesus is a choice we must make with every thought, every feeling, and with everything we say and do. If we do this, that door will be locked in its open position and we can come in and out of the house and never have to worry about it slamming shut. We will be victorious and the enemy will have to flee from us! So remember, Jesus is right here with you ready to have a conversation about everything that is happening in your life and ready to lead you and guide you down His path. He is our provision and He will be everything He has promised to be: our way, our truth, and our life. Let's move on in our text.

John 14:15

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

This verse, and ones like it, ranks up there as some of the most misused and abused passages in the Bible. Most people read this and decide that they must go

and obey God's commandments and then they fill in their own personal list of what God has or has not commanded them to do. We all have this natural tendency to gravitate towards some standard of obedience because we love lists, we love rules, we love to know what we can "do" so we can go "do" it and make sure God knows that we love Him (after all, since we are convinced we are our own life all we need is the list so we can go and live it). This kind of thinking has trapped so many people in a kind of religious legalism that has robbed from them life in the Spirit. This is part of that lie that the enemy whispers in our ear: "you can be like God; you just need to go obey."

In the Greek, it is very clear how this passage is to be understood. First of all the phrase "will keep" is not an imperative; it is not a command to go and obey. Jesus is not saying that you have to obey Him to prove that you love Him. In fact, it is the other way around. The phrase "will keep my commandments" is in the future active indicative tense. Meaning that if you love Him then the natural result will be that you will obey Him. But the obedience follows your love.

Thus, when you see someone who is naturally obeying the commandments of God (and we will soon get to what "commandments" He is talking about), it means that this is a person who really is in love with Jesus. Obeying His commandments is the indicator or the fruit of the relationship. The person who obeys the Lord's commandments is the one who sees with God's eyes, feels with His heart, and thinks with His mind; thus, their actions naturally are in alignment with desires of the Lord. It works that way because the person who loves Jesus has decided to get out of the way and let Jesus fill their being so He can live through them.

I can tell you that even though I understand this truth about obedience I still have to constantly remind myself of it because when I am just reading the text and not *actively* applying the truth, I start to process this phrase in terms of what I need

to be “doing” to please God. Then when I start to think about what I could be “doing” I can feel the tension rising in my body and then I know something is wrong. When I take this queue from the Spirit, I am usually able to shake off the lie and thank the Lord that it is not up to me to be obedient, knowing that I can’t be no matter how hard I try. Then I am able to rest in the truth that all He wants is for me to believe that He is my “I Am” and choose accordingly for, if I do, He will be obedient through me.

So what are the commandments that Jesus is talking about? We are going to jump ahead to *Chapter 15* so we can get a clear answer and not be left to fill in the blanks in our own head.

John 15:12-13

This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.
"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:17

This I command you, that you love one another.

So going back to *verse 15*, it could read: those who are in love with me will naturally love other believers. It will just happen as a fruit of loving me because if you love me then I will get to live in you and love through you. And just so there is no confusion, this command to love uses the Greek word “*Agape*” which is a love that by definition originates from the divine. This is not the kind of love that we, as humans, can express; this is a love that is unique and exclusive to God. Thus, the

only we can have this type of love for others is if He is ruling and reigning in our being and loving others through us. So to express this in a way that integrates what we have already learned: the one who actively chooses to believe that Jesus is their way, their truth, and their life, will love and thereby will be obedient.

John 14:16-17

"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

This is our key, our secret to success: the permanent presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Up to this point in time neither the disciples, nor anyone else who had ever lived, had the provision that has been given to us. The Spirit in those days dwelt with people but not technically "in" people. That is because they had not yet received the new "wine skins," the new "*kainos*," the new nature in which He could dwell. Remember, you can't put new wine into old wine skins. But once Jesus conquered death and rose again, He gave us this new life. What a powerful provision!

Those in the world, however, do not get to experience God in this way because they have no relationship with Him (they don't know Him) and they don't even perceive Him in their midst. They are just blind men living in total darkness. Besides, if the Spirit came "into" them they would instantly die. Their old wine skins would rupture for they could not contain the holiness and perfection of God. Again, that is why all must be new!

Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as “another helper” or in the Greek literally another comforter, encourager, or advocate. All of these words are fitting for the translation. But the key thing I want to point out is the use of the word “another.” In the Greek there are two words that Jesus could have used, “*heteros*” or “*allos*.” “*Heteros*” literally means another of a different kind (as in heterosexual); whereas, “*allos*” means another of the same kind. Jesus used the word “*allos*.” In other words, He is sending another helper like Himself in all regards. As Jesus is part of the Godhead and shares the exact same nature as the Father, so is the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the rest of the Godhead.

Jesus also as refers to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth and since Jesus is the truth, then His provision for our lives is the Spirit which dwelt in Him. This is phenomenal and inconceivable. The magnitude of Jesus’ provision for our lives is beyond our ability to even grasp. He gives us His Spirit that will lead us and guide us in His truth. Do you understand how special and provided for you are? If you open yourself up to this truth you might actually start to grasp how deep, how high, how wide, and how long His love for you really is. This is not something you should ever again doubt; rather, this truth of His unbelievable love for you is something that He wants you to live in and continually experience.

There is something else really unique about this verse. Jesus says that the Spirit will abide with us forever. The Greek word He used which is translated into English as “be with you” or in some translations as “abide” is not the normal word for abide. The normal word, as is used in *John 14:7* where He says the Spirit now “abides” with you or in *John 15:5* where Jesus commands us to abide in Him, is the word “*meno*,” which means to stay in a given or fixed place—to be attached. But the word Jesus used is ‘*eimi*’ as in “Egoo *eimi*” or the “Am” of “I Am.”

In other words, the Spirit is and always will be with us. There is no place we can go from His presence, for He is there. There is no place we can hide from God, for He is there. There is no sin that we can commit that will cause the Spirit to withdraw from us, for He is always there. From the moment that we are born again, the presence of God in the person of the Holy Spirit is in our “*kainos*” (our new creation) now and forever.

You may quench Him to a very small part of your body, but you don’t have to fear and you don’t have to worry about doing anything so bad that you have crossed some line of no return. If the Spirit is in you He will always be in you. That is the promise of Jesus and since Jesus’ words were given to Him by the Father (***John 14:10***), this is the promise of the Father, and as such it is incontestable. It is always our reality! God is always right here in our new creation; always accessible, always ready to lead us and guide us in truth when we give Him control and let Him be our way, our truth, and our life.

Praise the Lord; this is so powerful and so comforting. This truth should not only help us sleep at night but is the reason why we can trust ourselves to Jesus and let Him be our “I Am.” He has already made provision for everything we could ever need and the provision is His Spirit of truth. Unbelievable!

Let’s stop being so ridiculous and foolish demanding that we can somehow be our “I Am” and let’s rightfully trust ourselves to Him all the time.

Let’s Pray.