

Wisdom to Follow

A Present-Day Illustration

Akira hurried with the final additions of her makeup. Cassandra would be at her apartment soon to pick her up for church. Akira liked and looked up to the 40-year-old Cassandra. She seemed to have it all together. The two had met at a Blacks in Engineering networking event. Akira, only one year out of college, was looking for a mentor. Cassandra and Akira took to one another easily.

While Akira had gleaned a lot from Cassandra over the last year, what seemed to stand out most was her personal life and character. Akira was a wreck. She had been desperate to find a boyfriend, love, and acceptance. She had also been desperate to make a name for herself professionally. She wanted it all!

Cassandra had listened, encouraged, and shared Christ with Akira. It was not that Akira had not heard about Jesus before, but Cassandra's life and love were so inviting. Yes, Akira had a good job, but so many things were missing.

"It's not things," said Cassandra. "It's Christ."

"Does anyone want to accept Christ?" the pastor asked. "Please make your way down to the altar, and we will pray with you."

Akira stood to her feet and made her way to the aisle, as Cassandra also rose.

"I want the Lord. I want a new life," Akira told the altar worker.

1. *What things do people believe would give them a better, more fulfilling life if they had them?*

2. *Have you believed in and gone after things that did not make your life better? Explain your answer.*

3. *In what ways do our beliefs affect our lives?*

My Father's House

John 14:1-4, KJV

1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

John 14:1-4, NIV

¹"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ²My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴You know the way to the place where I am going."

Just before Jesus ate the Last Supper with His disciples, He washed the feet of His disciples, predicted His betrayal by Judas, and told Peter that he would deny knowing Jesus in His hour of greatest need. It was in the context of this emotionally chaotic time that Jesus told His temperamental-but-loyal disciples to not allow their hearts to be troubled.

Jesus encouraged His followers not to allow their hearts to be anxious. So, to address their fears, Jesus gave them hope of one day being reunited with Him.

Because Jesus is truly God, and one in essence with the Father, He told His followers that to believe in God is also to believe in Him. The disciples' eternal destination was an actual place (not simply some ethereal place), and Jesus was going there to get the place ready for those who love Him. Jesus describes heaven as a large house with many rooms in which His followers will dwell. And if Jesus was going to go to all that trouble to get the place ready, then surely He was going to return to bring them back to be with Him. He also reminded them that they knew the way to where He is going.

4. *How did Jesus address the fears of the disciples?*

5. *What promise did Jesus make to His followers?*

The Way, the Truth, and the Life

John 14:5-7, KJV

5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

John 14:5-7, NIV

⁵Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

⁶Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

Christians are often criticized for being too exclusive because they teach that salvation can be found in no one else but Jesus Christ. Surely, people say, with so many religions and proposed paths to God throughout human history, claiming an elite path to salvation is arrogant, biased, and narrow-minded. Some falsely believe that the exclusive salvation claim of Christians about Jesus was a later invention of the Church.

However, in regard to the claims of Jesus being the only way to heaven and the Father, He couldn't have been any clearer.

Thomas challenged Jesus' assertion that the disciples understood the way to which Jesus was referring when He was talking about preparing a place for them in the eternal kingdom. Thomas likely thought that Jesus was going to establish an earthly kingdom in Israel. Instead, He was telling them that He was about to leave.

Jesus answered Thomas's heartfelt question by clarifying that "the way" was not a political plan, or a military advance, or even a step-by-step guide to following Christ. Jesus Himself is the way. He embodies the path to God, and so anyone who would be reconciled with God must go through Him. In addition to being the way, Jesus embodies the truth. He not only taught what was true, but He is the very incarnation of truth.

There is nothing false about Him, so He cannot, and will not, leave the means of salvation up to debate. In addition to being the way and the truth, Jesus is the embodiment of life. Only in Him can we find the “full” life we all want (John 10:10). Once again, Jesus affirmed His essential unity with the Father. To know Jesus is to know God.

6. *What was confusing to Thomas about what Jesus was saying?*

7. *What did Jesus teach about the only way to be saved?*

In the Name of Jesus

John 14:8-14, KJV

8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?

10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my

John 14:8-14, NIV

⁸Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

⁹Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”

¹⁰Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.

¹¹Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves.

¹²Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the

KJV

Father.

13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

NIV

Father. ¹³And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."

When Jesus talked about knowing the way, Thomas asked for clarification. The Lord did something similar with Phillip in response to Jesus' statement that to know Him is to see the Father. Jesus seemed a bit incredulous that after all this time, Philip still didn't get it. To see Jesus is to see the Father. They are one in divine essence, while remaining separate Persons.

Therefore, Jesus made it clear to Philip that no further clarification, or teaching, or vision was necessary. To see and interact with Jesus was to see and interact with God the Father.

Jesus understood that the disciples were not getting what He was saying to them, so He appealed to the miraculous works He had performed by the power of God (as evidence of His unity with the Father). In His ministry, and in the early church through the apostles, God performed many miraculous signs in order to bring credibility to the Lord's message of redemption.

In addition, Jesus reminded His followers that they would perform many of the same miracles through the power of God—and perhaps even greater signs and wonders as their influence and presence expanded into the known world. Whenever they did these things, they were to remember that it was God alone who empowered them to perform such signs—and to humbly draw people's attention back to God and not them.

Jesus concluded His teaching by saying that if they were to ask anything in His name, He would do it, because God would be glorified by it. The "anything" Jesus refers to here is anything that is in alignment with the will of God. If it is, it will be given to us. Jesus' name should never be used for anything else.

8. *Why did Jesus seem frustrated with Philip?*

9. *What can we learn about God the Father by looking to Jesus?*

The Wisest Choice

It's astounding the number of "armchair experts" there are—you know, the people who sit on the sidelines and advise others on matters in which they have neither experience nor revelation. It usually starts with, "If I were you, I would. . ." which is a dangerous preference for whatever is to follow. Wouldn't it be wiser to start with the One who created us for His purpose? The answer to the age-old question "Why am I here?" is found in the One who placed you here!

Our identity is in Christ, and it was given to us by God. Our personality, our likes and dislikes, our DNA and our unique fingerprint were all created by God. No one knows us as He does because all those unique components are what makes us, us. Only God knows how each element of our character is used in the development of our faith and fulfillment of the purpose He wants us to fulfill. How many people spend their entire lives looking for the way to heaven, the truth of everything in the universe, and the most abundant life now and forever? The search for all those things should lead to the One who can answer all our questions and provide all things for us—Jesus.

If we truly want the best this life has to offer, as well as the promise of an incredible life lasting into eternity, we have only to listen to the words of Jesus in John 14. These words need to be heard by anyone who does not know Christ and any Christian who is feeling weary, depressed, and uncertain about life. When we feel as if believing in and following Jesus was not a wise choice, we must remember that no other way, no other person, no other truth explains everything we want to know.

10. *How and when did you realize you made the wisest choice in life by following Jesus?*

11. *Is it wrong to listen to the advice of other people about life? Explain your answer.*

12. *Why would people who are struggling to choose which way to go with their life not listen to the words of Jesus?*

'I Got This'

This generation has a catch phrase: "I got this." Well, the truth is, we "got" a lot less than we think we "got." We think we are wise when we are not. We don't know what each day will bring, or the number of days we have remaining. We must surrender our lives to Christ because we believe He is who He said He is, and He waits for everyone on the other side of this life. When we "got" Him, we "got" everything. If we don't, we have nothing.

► *If you believe in Jesus now, thank Him for the abundant life He gives today and the eternal life with Him that is coming and ask yourself, "What am I doing right now in my life to show that I truly believe He is who He said He is?" Write some of those things below. If you have not accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, your teacher can help you with that decision and answer questions you may have about who Jesus is.*

KEY VERSE

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. —John 14:6, KJV

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." —John 14:6, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of July 27 through August 2

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Colossians 1:24-29—Suffering on Behalf of the Church.
- Tues.** Titus 3:3-7—Saved by God's Mercy.
- Wed.** Luke 11:9-13—Ask: God Will Supply Your Needs.
- Thurs.** Romans 5:1-5—Rejoice in Your Sufferings.
- Fri.** Romans 5:6-11—God's Loving Actions toward Sinners.
- Sat.** Isaiah 40:1-8—Grass Withers but God's Word Stands.
- Sun.** James 1:1-11—Wisdom Overcomes Trials and Temptations.