

FPFWC Christian Development



Many Faces of Wisdom
July 2020

Summer Quarter

July 25, 2020

Lesson #4 – Wisdom to Follow

SCRIPTURE TEXT – John 14:1-14

KeyVerse- “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

ICE BREAKERS

1. How is Jesus the way, the truth, and the life in your life?
2. What should our motivation be when we make requests of Jesus?

LESSON BACKGROUND

Of the four New Testament's four Gospels, John's is the most distinctive. All four agree that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah. When telling the gospel story, Matthew, Mark, and Luke narrate many of the same episodes, usually with very similar words. John's Gospel shares much less material with the other three and offers many teachings that are not found elsewhere. He tells of extended conversations between Jesus and His opponents, as well as between Jesus and His followers. These provide perspective on Jesus' identity and mission as the divine Son of God who became human.

John connects these conversations to Jesus' miracles, which John calls “signs” (John 4:48; 20:30) to emphasize that they point to Jesus' identity and mission. Like the other Gospels, John arranges his material to focus on Jesus' death and resurrection, in which we see Jesus' mission come to its amazing fulfillment.

Our lesson text comes near the beginning of the chapters in John's Gospel that focus on Jesus' words and actions on the night before His crucifixion (John 13-18). Much of this material is Jesus' private teaching to His followers.

Hanging over the discourse is the shadow of Jesus' looming crucifixion (John 13:1). By what seems to be Satan's defeat of Jesus (13:21-27; 19:16-30), is actually Jesus' defeat of Satan. Though Jesus would no longer be present as He had been, His followers would not be alone, for Jesus promised to send God's Holy Spirit (14:16, 17, 26). By the Spirit's power, they would continue the work that God had begun in Jesus (16:7-14).

This section of John begins as Jesus washed His disciples' feet. This was to show them, in part, that in His death He, their Lord, would be serving them (John 13:1-17). As Jesus brought His teaching to a close, He prayed for His followers, asking the Father especially that they be unified as He and the Father are unified (17:6-26). As Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, He was willingly surrendering to a death that would free His disciples from the guilt of sin (18:2-9).

LESSON COMMENTARY –

14:1. The thought of Jesus' betrayal and departure (13:21-38) would have greatly disheartened the disciples. To console them, Jesus instructed, **Do not let your [pl.] heart be troubled.** The disciples could calm their hearts by faith [**believe in God and believe also in Me**]. The two occurrences of the verb "believe" are spelled the same (*pisteuete* in both), but that spelling could make either or both verbs a statement of fact (an indicative mood verb, "You do believe"), or a command (an imperative mood verb, "Believe!"), or a combination of the two (one could be a statement and the other a command). The first phrase could also be a question ("Do you believe in God?"). It is a complicated issue. The NET Bible (p. 2073 n. 8) is most likely correct in its reasoning: "[Jesus] is about to undergo rejection by his own people as their Messiah. The disciples' faith in him as Messiah and Lord would be cast into extreme doubt by these events, which the author makes clear were not at this time foreseen by the disciples. After the resurrection it is this identification between Jesus and the Father that needs to be reaffirmed (cf. Jn 20:24-29). Thus it seems best to take the first *pisteuete* [transliteration added] as indicative and the second as imperative, producing the translation "You believe in God; believe also in me."

14:2-4. Jesus' teaching about His **Father's house** with **many dwelling places** evokes the image of a first-century wealthy home with beautiful additions. Jesus would not **go to prepare a place** for His disciples unless He would also **come again and receive** them to Himself (v. 3). This "coming" is the pretribulation rapture (see the comments on Mt 24:36-44; 1Th 4:13-17) rather than the second coming since at the latter Jesus returns to stay on earth (Zch 14:3-4; Mt 24:29-31; Rv 19:11-21). This is Jesus' second revelation about the rapture (Mt 24:36-44 was a few days earlier, probably on Tuesday of Passion Week). Jesus deeply desires us to be with Him **where** He is (cf. 1Th 4:17). The disciples **know the way** (v. 4) Jesus will take to the Father's house. He has told them repeatedly of the cross.

14:5-6. Thomas questioned Jesus' logic. **Lord... how do we know the way?** Jesus affirmed (v. 6) their faith with the sixth **I am** claim in John. He is not one way but **the way** to God. He is not only true. He is **the truth**. Truth is embodied in Christ, and so is eternal **life** (1:4). **No one comes to the Father** for eternal life or for Christian living except first by way of faith in Christ.

14:7. Although born again (2:11; 14:10-11), the Eleven had not begun true intimacy with Christ. They lacked a more complete understanding of who He was. That He was the only way or access to the Father (v. 6) escaped their thinking so far. **If** they (**you** is pl. in Gk.) **had known** Christ intimately (cf. Php 3:10), they would have known the Father intimately as well. But they had not (v. 9). **From now on** references that moment forward. Through the farewell instructions (chaps. 13-17), they could gain an intimate knowledge (**know**) and full spiritual vision (**have seen**) of the Father.

14:8-9. **Philip**, in his request **show us the Father**, demonstrated the very unfamiliarity with the Father Jesus had just mentioned. Jesus had spent three

years with the disciples (v. 9) and yet they had **not come to know** Him fully (v. 9). To "know" or "see" Christ (**He who has seen Me**) is to recognize God Himself fully (**has seen the Father**). God the Father is completely revealed in Jesus the Son, but Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is distinct from God the Father in terms of their respective personhood. For this important point, see the comments on 1:1, 18. This claim of Jesus is nothing less than a stupendous declaration of deity, leading to the NT teaching of the Trinity.

14:10-11. Jesus is **in the Father, and the Father is in** Jesus—a holy, eternal fellowship and unity in the Godhead. The **words** that Jesus **speak[s]** are never on His **own initiative**, independent of the Father. **The Father abiding in Christ does His works**. The mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son stresses inseparability, yet maintains a distinction within the Trinity. If the disciples **believe because of Jesus' works themselves**, they would see the truth of this abiding relationship between the Father and the Son.

14:12. What are the **greater works** Jesus says believers will do? These greater works were made possible **because** Jesus went **to the Father**, i.e., after His ascension when the Holy Spirit was given. The "greater works" took place at Pentecost and ever since when people are brought to faith in Christ.

14:13-14. The promise that the disciples will do greater works than Jesus was now directly linked to their prayers in His Name. **Whatever you ask** (*aiteo*, a request from an inferior to a superior) begins the subject of prayer for the first time in the upper room teaching (15:7, 16; 16:23-24, 26). It also instructs Christians for the first time that prayer is to be made through Christ (**in My name**) to the Father (15:16; 16:23-24, 26). Prayer in Jesus' name suggests that the one who offers it understands that Jesus is the sole mediator between the one who prays and the Father (v. 6). The prayer is made for Jesus' sake, not primarily for personal benefit (cf. Ps 25:11). So we can ask in prayer as if Jesus were asking it. This implies that our prayers must be designed according to His will, character, and purpose (1Jn 5:14-15). But **if you ask Me** (v. 14) authorizes prayers also made to the Son of God (cf. Ac 7:59; 2Co 12:8). The promise **I will do it** must be harmonized with other conditions for prayer (e.g., Ps 66:18; Jms 4:3; 1Pt 3:7; 1Jn 5:14-15).

LESSON NUGGET – No wonder the disciples were troubled: Jesus was going to leave them, one of them would betray Him and Peter would deny Him. Jesus encouraged them by telling them about Himself and the Father: Jesus takes us to the Father; Jesus reveals the Father; Jesus glorifies the Father; and Jesus and the Father dwell with us.

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary; Wiersbe Bible Commentary; The Word for Today Bible and Standard Sunday School lesson.