

Fil-Am Community Church

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THE PATH

Key Verse: John 14:1-6

Folks, we have reached the end of our journey on this GodQuest series. I had great pleasure, and I'm sure, Pastor Dave as well, in sharing with you the messages that addressed some of the most difficult and thought-provoking questions that people ask, like

- Can truth be known?
- Does God exist?
- Can we trust the Bible?
- Why is there evil and suffering?
- And, last week, who is Jesus?

Even before we began this series, some of us here already know the answers to all of these questions. But some of us don't. Some of us know the answer to only maybe one or two or three questions but are still in the dark with the rest of the questions. And some of us are still trying to find the answer to questions that are not even on the list.

What I'm saying is that all of us are on different stages in our own personal GodQuest. All of us are searching. Some are far along, some are somewhere in the middle, and some are just beginning.

And I hope this series has spurred you on toward searching more of the great mysteries of the world which in fact are already unveiled for us in the Bible.

And today we will conclude this series of messages with what may be the most challenging question people ask about the claims of the Bible, and Jesus, and Christianity: **“What does it mean to follow Jesus?”**

If you’re not a follower yet, but you’re almost there but cannot make that jump from unbelief to belief this message is for you. If you’re a follower already, this will help you to examine yourself and check yourself and ask “Am I really following?” or “Am I really a follower?”

I’d like to ask you to turn in your Bibles to the Gospel of John, chapter 14, the passage we studied at the beginning of this journey, way back, five Sundays ago.

John 14 starts out like this.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And 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. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

*Jesus answered, **“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** —John 14:1–6 (NIV)*

This morning I'd like us to look at these words of Jesus. And by unpacking this passage, I'd like share with you three simple Truths to help you to know what it means to follow Jesus.

The first simple truth says

1. **I must recognize that there is only one way**

Jesus leaves no doubt in anyone's mind that he is the only way. His statement in the last verse emphasizes this fact. "I am **THE way**". Jesus didn't say, "I will show you the way" "I will guide you in the way" "I am a way" He said, "**I am the way.**"

In a world that is filled with many different religions and a society that wants us to believe that all are equal, it's difficult for some to believe that there is only one way.

After all there is Buddhism, Hinduism, Mormonism, Judaism, Catholicism, Christianity and a host of others. And, we are being told by society that we must be tolerant of others religions, beliefs, and practices. The new definition for tolerance is "to accept as equal."

Are all religions equal; do all roads lead to eternal life in heaven even though they all teach different things? Why would Christ come and suffer such a horrible death if there were many other ways? And if there are other ways how could Jesus claim to be the only way and still be considered equal with other religions? His words

were either truth and lead to Heaven or His words were and lie and lead to destruction.

Many other religions say that Jesus was a good teacher but not God. How could He be a good teacher when He claimed to be God? C.S. Lewis said, “He is either Lord, a lunatic, or a liar.”

Jesus said, “I am the way.” Some in society have said, “Jesus was arrogant, intolerant and His words were exclusive.” Jesus was not arrogant, or intolerant, but in a sense His words are exclusive. They exclude other religious beliefs and practices, but they do not exclude any person. It includes anyone who ever lived on earth. He is the way for anyone who would follow him. For the Bible says in John 3:16, “*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that **WHOEVER** believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*”

Talking about religious beliefs and practices, there was a time in my life when I stopped believing that Jesus was the only way. I was already a Christian then but backslidden.

And in my backslidden state, I rebelled against the God of the Bible and thought that other religions must be true too and Jesus was not the only way. This led me to dabble with eastern religions which eventually attracted me to yoga. At the time, I had drifted so far away from God that I lost the peace within me and began to experience panic attacks which I believed I already mentioned here before. So I tried yoga, hoping it would give me the peace and serenity I was looking for. And it worked. Every evening after coming from work, I would open the yoga book I

borrowed from the library and do all the physical exercises suggested there. And I realized how you could really twist and turn your body this and that way and not break it. The headstand was my favorite because it offered me the greatest relaxation effect. Let me demonstrate it. I will need two people to hold my feet. Just kidding.

As I said, the practice of yoga worked for me...for a time. Because after one year, it no longer was effective. No matter how many times and how much more intense I tried to practice it, it wasn't effective anymore in reducing the panic attacks I was getting. I did some research and it confirmed what I was experiencing. As you practice yoga, there comes a point when you hit a plateau or burn-out. Yoga teachers themselves experience this. And there's no known solution. They just say, stop it for awhile and return to it later.

Well, I stopped it and did not return to it. It wasn't the answer. Besides, if I were not backslidden then I wouldn't have tried it in the first place. Yoga has deep spiritual connection with Hinduism. I know some Christians are practicing it. They reason that it enhances their spirituality and makes them more relax and receptive to God. What they don't know is they are only inviting trouble. God tells us to meditate on his Word to experience his peace instead of doing yoga meditation.

Anyway, after my dalliances with false religions, God disciplined me until I came back to my senses and acknowledged that Jesus is **THE only way.**

And I've replaced yoga with yogurt. Now, I'm healthier than ever. And more at peace than ever, because of Jesus.

So, that's the first simple truth. There is only one Way. The second simple truth is that

2. I must realize that there are troubles along the way

Jesus begins his statement with these words to his disciples, "*Do not let your hearts be troubled.*" Jesus was comforting them because he was leaving soon. He was going to die. And he knew that they will be afraid once he leaves them alone.

You see, no one in this world is immune to trouble. Non-Christians and Christians alike experience troubles. Evil and suffering abound in this world but as we learned already God is not the author of evil but the devil. Now, not all bad things that happen to us come from the devil. We cannot blame the devil for every bad thing that happens to us. It may be just because of our own neglect and ignorance.

Some people think that the devil has a hand in every bad thing that happens that they shout "Get out of there, Devil", "Satan, get thee behind me" "Evil spirit, flee!" Because of this, one person wisely observed that Christians talk to the devil more than they talk to God.

I remember years back, I witnessed one Christian leader who was praying over someone who had a case of diarrhea. He was shouting "Spirit of diarrhea, get out of that body." That person ate spoiled food and he's blaming the devil instead of somebody who did not take care of the food properly? The devil is taking credit for more than he deserves.

Now, going back to our troubles, troubles come to us in every imaginable way. And Job is a perfect example of someone who was attacked by the devil in all fronts. Here is a guy who the Bible says has an unblemished character and yet underwent overwhelming grief and suffering.

He was attacked emotionally when his sons and daughters died. He was attacked financially when his possessions consisting of his animals and servants were killed by marauding invaders. He was attacked physically when the devil caused him to have sore boils all over his body. He was attacked relationally when his own wife turned against him. He was attacked intellectually and spiritually when his friends argued that it was all his fault that all those things happened.

If you think you're getting a raw deal in life, think of Job. Or to make it more relevant to you at present, think of those little children in Africa who are malnourished because they don't have food to eat; or think of those suffering from terminal illness or those who don't have a job or who lost their homes because of fire or hurricane. You may be in a much better situation than others in this world.

The fact remains that troubles are as inevitable as the sun rising in the morning. You can expect them to happen. Because they will happen whether you like it or not. And for a Christ-follower, troubles seem to be greater than others. Why? Because the Bible says in 1 Peter 5:8 that "*Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*"

Aside from the fact that you get the normal dose of trouble every human being gets, you also become the target of more troubles brought on by the devil. He is

busy attacking Christians. He will not attack non-Christians. They are not his enemies.

That's the second simple truth. There are troubles along the way. But as Jesus said, ***“Don't let your hearts be troubled.”*** Why? Because the third simple truth states

3. I must remember that, no matter what, Jesus will hold me together all the way.

Jesus says *“You believe in God, believe also in me.”* The NLT renders it as, *“Trust in God, and trust also in me.”*

And this is really the foundation for finding peace to get through the tough times. All of the other things that he said to them were hinged upon this one secret.

TRUST IN HIM. He goes on to explain some of the reasons and the ways that they can trust in him, but he never really moves beyond trust as the thing that will get them through.

Philippians 4:6,7 *“6 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. 7 If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”* (NLT)

This verse tells us not to worry about anything, but to pray. And I find the focus here interesting. It doesn't say that if you don't worry but pray, God will instantly change all of your circumstances so there's nothing left to worry about. That's not trust. That's faith. And faith is necessary. Sometimes God does want to miraculously change your circumstances. But if that's how it was every time, then when Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, then God would have said, "Okay, I'll make another way. You don't have to go to the cross." But as we know, that isn't what happened at all. There was no change in Jesus' circumstances because of that prayer, and yet that prayer wasn't wasted or a failure. Instead, I believe it was in that prayer that Jesus found the strength to do what was necessary – to go to the cross. It was his Trust in God that led him to pray, "your will be done." And it was this trust that gave him peace.

Trust and faith are really similar words, almost treated as synonyms sometimes. But really they are miles apart. Faith is what moves a mountain or calms a raging storm. But do you know what is greater than faith? What I find more spectacular than Jesus calming the storm, was his trust in God that allowed him to be fast asleep in perfect peace while the storm raged all around him.

Faith is knowing that **God CAN** change things. **Trust** is knowing that **God WILL** do what's best. It's trust that keeps you floating until the miracle comes.

Isaiah 26:3, *"You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, whose thoughts are fixed on you!"* (NLT)

Why can we trust in Jesus?

He is in control. What happens, happens for a reason. When the soldiers came to arrest Jesus it would have been easy to forget that God was in control. It may have looked very much like the Roman government or the Jewish leaders were the ones in control. And it may have even seemed that Satan was successfully thwarting the plan of God. But Jesus explained to them that it was all a part of God's plan. Satan may have thought it was his idea to crucify Jesus, but he was really just playing right into God's hands. Jesus explained that he had to leave them, but it was for good reason. It was only if he left that he could prepare heaven for them.

Many times in our lives, the situations may seem hopeless. We may even question, "Where is God in all this?" We may wonder how anything good could possibly come of our situation. But Romans 8:28, "And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them."

Maybe we use this verse so much in Christianity that it becomes a cliché, but the fact is that it's a very real truth from God's word. No matter what the enemy throws your way, God will turn it into good. You can trust God, because he assures you that there is a reason for it. He didn't send the trials your way. But he didn't stop them, because he plans to do something great through them. We may not always see right now what good is going to come of it, but that's where trust comes in. God says it will turn into good. You may see it someday, and you may never recognize it. But good will come.

Because Jesus is in control, he is able to hold you up and hold you together. When things around you seem to be falling apart and you feel that you yourself are in danger of falling apart, remember that, no matter what, Jesus will hold you together all the way until you reach heaven.

Let me show you a video of Louie Giglio, a pastor who was a guest at one of Chris Tomlin's concerts in the past. Louie talks about Jesus holding us together. Kevin was the one who passed on this video to me weeks ago right after our second session on GodQuest.

VIDEO

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0-NPPIeeRk&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNL5ma9XNMk&feature=related>

Listen one more time to the words of Jesus in John 14, and listen to the invitation that is inherent in what He says:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And 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. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

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

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Notice that He doesn't say, "I can show you the way." He doesn't say, "I will lead the way." He doesn't say, "I will give you directions, I will draw you a map." He says, "**I am the way.**" He is not only the way **TO** heaven. He is the way **OUT of darkness**, the way **OUT of sin**, the way **OUT of emptiness**. He is the way of freedom from guilt, of deliverance from shame and death and despair.

I invite you to respond to the invitation in Jesus' words and find the object of your heart's quest in Him. Wherever you were born, whatever you've done, however badly you've blown it, whether or not you've got issues—and we've ALL got issues!—Jesus extends an invitation to you today. You don't have to apply, you don't have to qualify, because the invitation is universal ... exclusive ... it is for everyone. It is for you.

All you must do—all you **CAN** do—is confess your sin, accept His sacrificial death on the cross as payment for your sins, and commit to following Him day by day, as **He** enables you. No matter what others may say, no matter how unworthy you may feel, Jesus will not bar the door against you. On the contrary, **HE** paid your entrance fee. **HE** took your hazing. **HE** underwent the initiation ... you need only to accept.

If you are here today as a skeptic or a seeker, meaning you're open to God but you haven't yet committed to loving Him and following Jesus Christ, I say to you today, in Jesus' name, you don't have to get your act together, you don't have to figure things out, you don't have to pick yourself up or clean yourself off. ... He'll

take care of that. You can just come to Jesus, in simplicity and humility, by praying silently these words I speak aloud:

“Lord God, King of the universe, **thank You** for throwing open the doors of the kingdom to me through the work of Your Son, Jesus Christ. I come to you simply, and humbly. I have nothing to offer you but my sins, which I surrender and turn from, and I ask your forgiveness for them all. Thank You for making it possible, thank You for making it happen, that I could come and experience the same salvation as the greatest saints of history, the same salvation that is available to everyone who will come. Amen.”

Let us pray.....