

He Will Teach You All Things (John 14:26b-31)

Expository Lessons from the Gospel of John

I. Background for the Farewell Discourse

- a. The concepts from the **gospel of John** that we will cover in this lesson are simple but have had a profound impact on my own understanding of the Christian faith. I encourage you to give these things careful consideration, and to go back and review all the pertinent Scriptures on your own.
- b. As we resume the story that we have been following in **John 14** it is Thursday night, the night before Jesus is to be crucified.
 - i. Jesus has had his Last Supper with the disciples, at which (we know from **Matthew, Mark** and **Luke**) He instituted the Lord's Supper with the bread and the cup.
- c. After dinner has ended and Judas has departed, but before Jesus and his disciples cross over to the Garden of Gethsemane (where Jesus will be taken prisoner), Jesus gives a lengthy and very significant talk to the apostles.
 - i. The passages we will cover in this lesson are part of that "Farewell Discourse", which we find in **John 13:31-17:26**.
- d. In the prior lesson we read where Jesus told the apostles:
 - i. "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." (**John 14:25-26**, NKJV)
 - ii. Here Jesus makes two promises to the apostles regarding the Holy Spirit.
 1. The Holy Spirit will "teach them all things". (We will discuss in this lesson); and
 2. The Holy Spirit will bring into their remembrance all things that Jesus had told them. (We discussed this in the prior lesson.)
 - a. We also looked at other Scriptures throughout the Old Testament and New Testament that speak of the work of the Spirit in inspiring the writings of the prophets and apostles.

- b. The foundation of all Christian teaching is the reliability of the Scriptures. We can have full confidence in the Scriptures because the writers were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

II. He Will Guide You into All Truth (Read **John 14:25-31**)

- a. Summary of the passage.
 - i. Jesus gives them His peace; He does not want them to be anxious.
 - ii. Jesus is going to the Father.
 - iii. However, He promises the He will come back.
 - iv. He says the Father is greater than He is.
 1. The Son is divine, yet there is an order. The Father is *greater than* the Son.
 - v. The “ruler of this world” (Satan) is coming.
 1. A reminder of who rules this world. When Jesus was being tempted three times by Satan, the devil shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and offers them to Jesus if He will but bow down and worship Satan. (**Matthew 4:8-9, Luke 4:5-9**)
 - a. Satan claimed that he has all the kingdoms of the world; Jesus did not refute that claim of Satan in the temptation accounts **Matthew 4** or **Luke 4**; and in **John 14:30** he refers to Satan as “the ruler of this world”.
 2. We should not be surprised when we see evil things happening in the world around us, in view of who is ruling it. The world may *appear to be a nice* place, but that is only on the surface. In this world, things are not as they appear!
 - a. An example, from here in New England: The yards in this neighborhood all look like a nice flat green carpet. However, in reality there is just a thin layer of dirt graded to cover over all the boulders and stones that lie everywhere, just beneath the surface. In reality, Eastern Massachusetts where we are is just a pile of rocks and boulders, which you see when you walk in the local forests.

- b. The evil that takes place around us is not God's fault. It is caused by the Evil One, Satan, who Jesus describes as a murderer, destroyer and liar. (**John 8:44, John 10:10**)
 - vi. Jesus says, "I love my Father and do exactly as He says."
 - 1. This is always the true test for love of God (not feelings).
- b. Re-read **John 14:25-26**.
 - i. "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." (**John 14:26**, NKJV)
- c. Also read a related passage, **John 16:12-13**.
 - i. "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." (**John 16:12-13**, NKJV)
- d. **Question:** Jesus says the Spirit will teach "you" all things, and guide "you" into all truth. *Who* is included in the "you" that Jesus is referring to?
 - i. **Possible Answers:** Within the greater Christian world, I have heard of three possible ways to answer this question:
 - 1. **Option 1:** The "you" applies to the church (at least to the one that I happen to be a part of). Therefore, the church over time continually is being guided into all truth; OR
 - 2. **Option 2:** The "you" applies to every individual Christian. Therefore, I personally am being guided into all truth (and so are all the other Christians living now and earlier); OR
 - 3. **Option 3:** The "you" applies only to the apostles, the ones who were in the room with Jesus when He was speaking. Therefore, they (only) would be guided into all truth.
 - ii. As you can imagine, the way we answer the question above has enormous consequences!
 - iii. **Roman Catholics tend to see the "you" as referring to *the church*.** They hold that Jesus is promising here that the Spirit will guide *the church* into all truth; and that this will continue over time, *through progressive revelation*.

1. An example, from the National Catholic Register (oldest Catholic newspaper in the US; owned by EWTN, a large Catholic cable TV and radio media company):
 - a. “In **John 14:26** and **16:13** Jesus says that the Holy Spirit ‘will lead you into all truth.’ The [Roman Catholic] Church learns things through the ages. Theological or spiritual knowledge did not cease to grow or expand after the apostles. We still reflect upon doctrines today.”
 - b. Notice that they assume that the “you” that Jesus promises will be guided by the Holy Spirit refers to the Roman Catholic Church.
 - c. Therefore, from these passages Roman Catholics conclude that the Holy Spirit is continuing to guide their church today into proper spiritual knowledge and doctrine (a word which simply means teaching). This would include revealing new truths *that were unknown to the apostles and to the early church!*
2. John (Cardinal) Newman wrote a famous explanation of this in 1848, in *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*.
 - a. Newman taught that doctrine would develop like a person or a tree develops over time.
 - b. In chapter 2 of that work he provides analogies of development through slow, successive steps, including:
 - i. Seasons changing from one to another
 - ii. Ripening fruit
 - iii. Stages a flower goes through (bud to open flower)
 - iv. Human development (infancy to childhood to mature adult)
 - c. In the same chapter, Newman also says:
 - i. Lastly...Scripture...distinctly anticipates the development of Christianity, both as a polity and as a doctrine. In one of our Lord's parables ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ is even compared to ‘a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and hid in his field; which indeed is the least of all seeds, but

when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree,' and, as Mark words it, 'shoots out great branches, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches of it.' And again, in the same chapter of Mark, 'So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knows not how; for the earth brings forth fruit of herself.' Here an internal element of life, whether principle or doctrine, is spoken of rather than any mere external manifestation; and it is observable that the spontaneous, as well as the gradual, character of the growth is intimated."

3. According to Newman's perspective, the Holy Spirit gives the church greater understanding over time, to further develop teachings (and possibly even to change them) over the ages. Examples of things that have been added to Roman Catholic teaching over the centuries include:
 - a. A more precise delineation of the relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (the Spirit proceeding from the Father *and the Son*)
 - b. Praying to Mary and the saints
 - c. Statues and images related to worship
 - d. Bodily assumption of Mary into heaven
 - e. Bishop of Rome as head of the church worldwide
 - f. Celibacy of priests/ presbyters
 - g. Precise understanding of transubstantiation (change in bread and wine during the Lord's supper)
 - h. Purgatory
 - i. Just war, crusades, non-separation of church and state
 - j. Whether those Christians who are outside the Roman Catholic Church can be saved.
 - k. (Currently the church is wrestling with whether divorced and remarried can participate in Lord's supper, and the spiritual state of active homosexuals)

- iv. **Many Protestants to see the “you” in this promise** (those who will be taught all things and be guided into all truth) **as referring to each individual believer**, or perhaps to particular church groups.
1. The image: When I am in my easy chair studying my Bible on my own, the Holy Spirit is leading me (personally) into all truth. That might include “truths” that were different from what the apostles understood in the beginning.
 - a. Of course, *if that is true*, the Holy Spirit *also* must be doing the same thing to my neighbor across the street, leading all the other Christians, everywhere, to “all truth”.
 2. Many, taking this kind of approach, conclude “Our church leaders are spiritual people, so certainly the Holy Spirit must be guiding *them* into all truth...”
 3. A rather obvious problem with this approach: all the believers and all the churches are arriving at all kinds of divergent and contradictory conclusions!
 - a. How can the Holy Spirit be guiding all these different people and churches into *different truths* that contradict one another? This can’t be possible!
- v. **The early Christians understood the “you” is in these passages as referring to (and limited to) the apostles**.
1. Recall that in the same statement in **John 14:25-26** Jesus also had said “the Spirit *will remind you of all things I said to you”.*
 - a. Obviously from context, the “you” in that case referred to *those who had heard Jesus first-hand*, the apostles themselves. 2. This was the view of the early Christians from the beginning. The following quotes are from early Christian writers, taken from *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, edited by David Bercot, from the article on Apostolic Faith.
 - a. From Irenaeus (writing c. 180 AD), bishop of the church in Lyons, modern-day France, who in his youth had been taught by Polycarp, in Smyrna. Note that Polycarp had been a direct disciple of the apostle John.
 - i. “It is unlawful to assert that the apostles preached before they possessed ‘perfect

knowledge,' as some do even venture to say, boasting themselves as being improvers of the apostles. For, after our Lord rose from the dead, the apostles were energized with power from on High when the Holy Spirit came down [upon them]. They were completely filled and had perfect knowledge. They departed to the ends of the earth, preaching the glad tidings of the good things sent to us from God."

1. (Source: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 3, chapter 1; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers, volume 1, p. 414)
 2. (Irenaeus here is saying that anyone claiming to be *an improver* of what the apostles taught must be dead wrong. Because the apostles had been given perfect (meaning *complete*) knowledge, nothing would or could be added to it.)
- ii. "True knowledge is that which consists in the doctrine of the apostles and the ancient constitution of the church throughout all the world. It also consists in the distinctive manifestation of the body of Christ according to the succession of the bishops. For by this they have handed down that church which exists in every place and which has come down even unto us. She is guarded and preserved without any forging of Scriptures, by a very complete system of doctrine. She neither receives any addition to, nor does she allow any diminishing of, the truths which she believes. True knowledge also consists of reading the Word of God without falsification, but with a lawful and diligent exposition in harmony with the Scriptures—both without danger and without blasphemy. Above all, it consists in the pre-eminent gift of love, which is more precious than knowledge, more glorious than prophecy, and which excels all the other gifts of God."
1. (Source: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 4, chapter 33; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers, volume 1, p. 508)

- b. From Tertullian (writing c. 197 AD), writer from Carthage, North Africa.
- i. “When He, the Spirit of truth, will come, He will lead you into all truth.’ (**John 16:13**) He thus shows that there was nothing of which the apostles were ignorant, to whom He had promised the future attainment of all truth by the help of the Spirit of truth.”
 1. (Source: Tertullian, *The Prescription Against Heretics*, chapter 22; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 3, p.253)
- c. From a debate (written down c. 320) between Archelaus, a Christian bishop vs. Manes, the heretic who founded Manichaeism.
- i. “As Paul himself seems to tell us, and as we have also learned from the earlier account given in the Gospel, to introduce new preaching, teaching, evangelizing, or prophesying is not (in this life, at least) held out on the same terms to any person in the later times [after the apostles]. And if the opposite ever appears to be the case, that person can only be held to be a false prophet or a false Christ.”
 1. (Source: *Disputation of Archelaus and Manes*; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 6, p. 210)
 - ii. “Those who seek to set up any new dogma have the habit of very readily perverting into conformity with their own notions any proofs they care to take from the Scriptures.... The apostolic word marks out the case in these words, ‘If anyone preaches any other gospel to you other than that which you have received, let him be accursed.’ (**Galatians 1:8-9**) Consequently, in addition to what has been once committed to us by the apostles, a disciple of Christ should receive nothing new as doctrine.”
 1. (Source: *Disputation of Archelaus and Manes*; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 6, pp. 213-214)

2. (Conclusion: No one can add to the teaching handed down from the apostles.)
3. In summary, how the early Christians understood this:
 - a. Jesus' promise of being guided into all truth, and being taught all things, applied only to the apostles. It did not extend to others over time.
 - b. When Jesus said they would be led into all truth, He meant it. They would receive the full and complete package of the teachings of the faith, from the Holy Spirit. No more would be added later.
 - c. Anyone who claimed they could add to or change what was revealed to the apostles was to be rejected as a false teacher.
 - d. Doctrine (teaching of the church) would not develop over time. It was handed down complete, fully developed.
 - e. Our task is to guard, protect and advance the faith originally handed down. It was handed down complete. We are to make no additions, nor are we to delete anything.
- e. The early Christian understanding of this foundational teaching is supported by the Scriptures:
 - i. "Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." (**Jude 3**, NKJV)
 - ii. "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (**2 Timothy 2:1-2**, NKJV)
 1. I have heard this passage taken out of context to support a deviant form of discipling: "Whatever *I tell you*, you are then to tell others, who in turn will tell yet others." (Passing whatever you have been told down others, who will then indoctrinate a third generation in the same way.)
 2. Rather, Paul is telling Timothy that whatever Timothy heard from the apostle Paul, he should entrust to faithful men, who in

turn would pass that along to others (the same things *that Paul had said*).

3. The challenge here for us: to uncover the treasure of the gospel message that was handed down to Paul and the other apostles; and to pass *that great treasure* down to others.
- iii. “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” (**Galatians 1:6-9**, NKJV)
1. People are often impressed with people with special titles, seminary training or advanced degrees. They may lead large churches. They may even be eloquent or entertaining speakers.
 2. Yet Paul says *even if he* (the apostle Paul) or *an angel who has come from heaven* should teach a different gospel than the one originally handed down, may that false teacher be cursed and cut off from God!
 3. No person, no group of theologians, *not even another apostle or an angel* can change the gospel that was originally handed down by the apostles.
- iv. “O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge – by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.” (**1 Timothy 6:20-21**, NKJV)
1. The original Christian faith is a trust, a treasure, that has been handed down by the Holy Spirit to the apostles. We are called to guard it, defend it, and protect it.
- f. This teaching has critical implications for us today.
- i. In New England, a banner draped in front of many churches reads: “Don’t put a *period* where God has put a *comma*.” (This is often accompanied by a rainbow symbol.)
 1. The underlying meaning of that statement: That church wants to *add to* the Christian faith handed down by the apostles and contained in Scripture.

- a. They want to change things in the Bible that they don't like.
 - b. In the Boston area, that includes rejecting Biblical roles for men and women, and embracing a homosexual lifestyle.
2. Ironically, there are *neither commas nor periods* in the earliest (Greek) Scriptures!
 3. The sentiment expressed by these signs and banners is *exactly opposite* of what we find in Scripture. The faith was handed down complete; we have no business adding anything more to it.
 4. Once a person accepts the false idea that there are "new truths" we can add to (or change in) the Christian faith, they can justify changing anything in the Bible that they do not like. This opens the floodgates to *all kinds* of heretical teachings.
 - a. This is especially "convenient" for those who do not like Jesus' *countercultural teachings*. Many Christians want to change those things in order to blend in with the world. They seek approval from the world and do not want to be hated, looked down upon, or mocked for following some of the hard teachings of Jesus and the apostles.
- ii. One recent example that comes to mind: a prominent Christian teacher, who clearly does not grasp this foundational concept that the Christian faith was handed down complete, to the apostles, in the beginning.
 1. His claim: God is gradually revealing more truth to us over time. Therefore, church understands things now that were not understood in earlier times, even at the beginning.
 - a. He pointed to the example of the treatment of Blacks in the US: black slavery until the 1860's, followed by segregation, followed by civil rights.
 2. He used this to advocate for new, more "progressive" views in the church, specifically to liberate women from Biblically defined roles.
 - a. He even went so far as to claim *that every passage of Scripture that speaks of a difference in the roles of men and women* can be nullified. The reason? Because false

teachers claim that the Holy Spirit “is at last leading us to *new, clearer understanding* of God’s *true objective*”.

- b. Practical implications this teacher was proposing include:
 - i. women preachers in church;
 - ii. women “elders”;
 - iii. women leading men in the church and home; and
 - iv. a husband is no longer to be considered the head of his wife and family!

3. This teacher said that he and his wife had been experimenting with what is essentially a *headless marriage*, with no designated leader! Instead of leadership being determined by gender (husband leading the wife) he claimed it should be based on whichever one of them happened to be more naturally “gifted in leadership”!
 - a. However, Paul taught “For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church...” (**Ephesians 5:23**, NKJV)
 - b. Let us recall that Peter endorsed Paul’s writings as *inspired, written with the wisdom given to him*. Anyone who tries to twist what Paul says (or anything else written in Scripture) is *headed for destruction*.
 - i. “...Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.” (**2 Peter 3:15-16**, NKJV)
 - c. **Question** (based on **Ephesians 5:23**): If the husband is no longer head of the wife, what does that say about Christ and the church?
 - i. **Follow-on Question:** *And if Christ is no longer head of a church, why would a serious Christian remain there?*

- iii. Others use the same logic (considering themselves to be more enlightened than the apostles and more progressive than Scripture), to justify even homosexual lifestyle and homosexual marriage in supposedly Christian churches.
 - 1. Note that while many today think of acceptance of homosexuality and homosexual marriage is a sign of “progress”, it is actually a return to pagan pre-Christian European practices common in places like Greece and Gaul (modern-day France).
 - 2. For documentation of pagan customs during the time of the early church, see Bardesan (sometimes called Bardesanes), c. 200 AD, Christian writer likely from Edessa or Syria or Parthia, in *Book of the Laws of Divers Countries*; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 8, p. 733.
 - 3. Note that as Christians, we should not concern ourselves very much what laws the government makes (regarding homosexuality and marriage).
 - a. Unlike the various nations around them, the early Christians wherever they were rejected polygamy, homosexual marriage, remarriage after divorce, adultery, incest, killing adulterous spouses, etc.
 - b. Christians in the beginning understood that the kingdoms of the world were separate from the kingdom of God. Christians must follow the teachings of Jesus and His apostles on all moral issues. However, we are not called to use the power of the government to enforce our lifestyle on unbelievers in the world.
- iv. The real issue: are we going to cave to the predominant culture around us; or will be *distinctly counter-cultural* and conform instead to a *distinct world-wide Christian culture defined once for all times in the New Testament*.
- g. There is no new revelation after the apostles, who were led into all truth. Our job is to restore and guard that wonderful deposit. In our day that will include unpopular teachings on:
 - i. Role of men and women in church and family
 - ii. Head covering
 - iii. Divorce and remarriage

- iv. Participation in war, lawsuits
- v. Forgiving others
- vi. Greed and materialism
- vii. Sexual purity, holiness and separation from the world
- h. Some people have accused me (and others in our group) of being “too focused on the early Christians”, or overly influenced by David Bercot (who writes about the early Christian perspectives). As we defend our countercultural beliefs, convictions and lifestyles, we need to emphasize that *we are simply striving to follow the Apostolic Faith*, the faith Jesus handed down to the apostles. The Holy Spirit guided the apostles into all truth, and to complete knowledge on matters of faith and spiritual teaching.
 - i. Our goal is not to copy the practices and beliefs of the early Christians. Rather, we should be *striving to embrace the Apostolic Faith*. This is the full and complete deposit of truth given to the apostles from Jesus, and as guided by the Holy Spirit.
 - ii. We must be devoted to studying “the faith once for all entrusted to the saints”, defending it by pointing to Scripture, and teaching it - *in season and out of season*.
 - iii. Historically, one of the most significant (and unfortunate) shifts in the Christian faith was in departing from this teaching of Jesus, grasped by Christians in the beginning: that the faith was handed down complete. It would not develop over time. Nothing was to be added to it nor deleted from it.
 - iv. One of Satan’s most strategic moves has been to introduce the idea that doctrine can develop (*improve or change*) over time.
 - 1. This is the first step to corrupting the church.
 - 2. Once a church accepts that false foundation, the stage is set for abandoning sound Biblical teaching *on any counter-cultural stance*. The church will try to bend the truth in an attempt please the world, rather remain faithful to Jesus and to what the apostles handed down.
 - v. No one can add to the original faith, nor take away from it. The concept of “contending for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” is a foundational teaching for us to restore, embrace, defend and spread.