

The Gospel of John: The Role of the Holy Spirit

Matt Hessel | John 14:15-27

How's everyone doing? Good. Hey, go ahead and open your Bibles to John 14. We're going to close out chapter 14 today and then touch on part of chapter 16.

Let me ask you a question? Have you ever had the chance to meet with someone who you greatly respect, someone who you admire, someone you love, and someone you tried to emulate right before that person dies? I'm not talking about a sudden death. I'm talking about a person who is on his death bed, the end is very near, and you both know it. Maybe a grandparent, maybe a parent, maybe a long-time mentor—someone who you have great admiration for, someone you have great respect for and you tried to model after, someone whom you followed.

Maybe that conversation starts off with reminiscing, right? You bring up old memories. Maybe you bring up old, inside jokes. And for a second you can't escape the thought of how blessed you have been to have that person in your life. What happens next? Usually you are kind of overwhelmed with emotions. Maybe fear sets in. Maybe you're just overtaken with nostalgia. Maybe you're thinking, "I've no idea what I'm going to do after this. I have no idea how I'm going to be able to go on without this person."

That is when the conversation usually shifts. The conversation shifts from reminiscing to, "Here's the last thing that I want you to know." The person dying wants to say, "Here's the last thing that I can teach you. Here's the last thing that I want to leave you. The last thing that I want you to know—here it is." Have you ever been there before?

I thought about this for myself. If something were to happen to me and I had one chance to write my kids a letter, one chance to record a video for them what would I say? What would I try to leave them with? In those final, precious moments what would be the last thing that I would want to teach my kids?

That's the scene for John 14 through 16. John 14 is actually the end of the Last Supper and then chapters 15 and 16 are really Jesus and the disciples heading out to the Garden of Gethsemane—this is it. The crucifixion is only about 12 hours from this point and Jesus knows it. So in John 14 you see a sprinkling of questions from the disciples but the vast majority of these three chapters is red-letter. It's Jesus talking. It's the last conversation He has with His disciples—the guys who He has poured into, the guys who He spent every single day with for three years, the ones who He has taught, and laughed with, and corrected, and encouraged, and shaped, and empowered. He has one more chance to talk to them.

Jesus doesn't waste any words. In His last conversation with His disciples what He has to say has to be pretty intentional, right? So what does He say? Well, we know at this point the disciples are really starting to freak out. They had left everything that they had for Jesus. They had bet their lives on Him. They pushed all of their chips into the middle of the table for Jesus and now He's telling them that He is leaving and that they can't follow.

So for the first time the disciples are realizing that what they had in mind—about how Jesus was going to come and He was going to overthrow the Romans, and how He was going to re-establish Israel's

greatness, and how He was going to usher in this new earthly kingdom where He would rule and reign and they would get to be His cabinet—they would be seated in His inner court—for the very first time they are realizing that what they had bet on was not going to happen. They are starting to freak out.

There is a lot of desperation in their voices, understandably. And they're asking questions like, "Jesus, where are you going? What do you mean we can't follow you? Which way is the way? How are You going to manifest Yourself to us?" Here's the underlying theme to all of their questions, they are terrified of being alone. They're afraid of being abandoned. They're afraid that when the music stops they're not going to have a chair. They're terrified of being alone. And how often are paralyzed with the exact same fear?

Let me just ask you, do you feel alone? It doesn't matter what your circumstances are. They can be either good or bad. Your life circumstances could be fantastic, your relationships are great, they are flourishing. Or you could be in the gutter. Your relationships are bankrupt, non-existent. It doesn't matter if your life circumstances are good or bad—all of us can be paralyzed with the fear of being alone or of having the feeling of being alone, regardless of our circumstances.

Maybe that's you right now. You just feel alone. Maybe you don't. But I bet, at some point in the past, and at some point in the future we will all wrestle with this fear of being alone. So, I think we can really relate to the disciples right now. I think we can relate to this context. Everything is falling apart, nothing is going according to plan, and now the disciples are crippled with fear. So it is this fear that Jesus chooses to speak to in some of His last moments with the disciples.

Look at verse 15. We're going to go all the way through verse 27. Jesus says, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. Whoever has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me.

"And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." Judas (not Iscariot)," that's a raw deal having that name, right? There were two disciples named Judas there was Judas Iscariot, he is *the* Judas. Then there is this guy. Every time he introduced himself, "Hey, I'm Judas. No not that one, I'm not that one." Raw deal.

"Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, 'Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?' Jesus answered him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. Whoever does not love Me does not keep My Words. And the Word that you hear is not Mine but the Father's Who sent Me. These things I have spoken to you while I am still 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 that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.'"

Alright, here's the point of this text. If the disciples are terrified of being alone, Jesus, right here, is promising assurance. In 12 verses, by my count, there are nine references to not being left alone: to be

with you forever; He dwells with you; will be in you; I will not leave you; you in Me, I in you; manifest Myself to him; make Our home with him; the Father will send. Jesus is giving assurance.

Here's what He is saying to the disciples. He's saying, "You're not alone. You'll never be alone. I will always be with you and in you. Here's what that text says to you, "Christian, you're not alone. You'll never be alone. Jesus will always be with you and in you." In verse 26, Jesus says this assurance is going to come from the Helper, the Holy Spirit Whom He will send. So this assurance comes from the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Last weekend Aaron talked about the promise of the Holy Spirit in chapter 14, but do we really know what He does? Do we really know what the Holy Spirit does? Does He get treated like the crazy cousin at family reunions? The guy who only wears tie dyed t-shirts and nobody knows what does or who he really is.

Some of us might think that the three members of the Trinity are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Bible because we really don't know what the Holy Spirit does. And if we don't know the role of the Holy Spirit then all we are going to do is stunt our growth in Christ and maybe even allow despair to set in because we deny ourselves access to the power that has been given to us through Him.

So, what does the Holy Spirit do? There are multiple passages throughout the New Testament that talk about the different roles of the Holy Spirit. Today, we're going to hit on two that Jesus really focuses on.

Anybody here like to play golf? Do we have any golfers? Hey, alright—you guys are my people if you raised your hands. Well, I enjoy playing golf and a couple of years ago I had the opportunity to play a pretty well known course that has hosted a couple of U. S. Opens. And if you're going to play this course you have to have a caddy. That was a new experience for me. I had never played with a caddy before.

And, actually, I was a little bit nervous about it because I just thought it was going to be some strange dude walking next to me, looking over my shoulder, judging every flaw in my game for the entire round. On top of that, I really didn't know what a caddy did other than carry your clubs and move the flag stick when you putt. But, you had to have a caddy.

So, I got one when I got there. His name was Mark from Savanna, Georgia. So, Mark from Savanna, Georgia and I set out onto the course and at first he just walked with me. He was just talking to me, asking me questions. He asked me about my family and what did I do. And he told me stories about his family. It was to the point that I completely forgot that he was caddying for me. I forgot that I was playing a course that was going to destroy me. So he was a good caddy. It felt like I was just spending the afternoon with a friend.

For the first two holes he just watched me. He was just evaluating my game without me even knowing it. So by the third hole before every shot, without me even asking, he was handing me the right club that I needed. Sometimes he would hand me a different club than I would have picked. He was right every single time. This guy already knew my game. He knew exactly what I needed in every situation that I would find myself in on the course. His knowledge and understanding of the game and of the course made me look like I didn't know the difference between a golf ball and a football.

This became very apparent to me on the sixth hole. On the sixth hole I had a really bad lie. My ball was in a really bad spot about 20 to 25 yards to the right of the green. I'm looking at my shot and I'm

thinking, "Okay, I just have to carry it over the bunker. I have to hit my ball over a sand trap and hold it on the green. I'm just going to aim right at the hole." So, I turned to grab the club that I wanted to use and Mark is holding a different club. And he said, "Use this club." And without me saying anything he said, "Don't aim at the pin. I want you to aim and hit your shot 50 feet to the right of the hole."

I'm thinking, "What? What are you talking about?" I'm looking at the green and it's completely flat. There's no big break in the green. There's no real danger other than the bunker. I was certainly capable of hitting my shot over the bunker and holding the green, "What are you thinking? Are you trying not to get a tip? What are you doing?"

So, I do what he says and I hit my shot exactly where he told me to—landed the ball about 50 feet to the right of the hole. And right before the ball came to a stop on the green it turned just a little to the left, toward the hole. It started to roll just a little bit. Then it rolled a little bit more, and a little bit more—it started picking up momentum and it rolled right at the hole. I'm thinking, "This is going in. Am I the greatest golfer there is? I'm certainly going to get an invite to The Masters by the end of the day."

The ball rolls 50 feet and stops one inch from the hole. Now that's not a bad thing. I'm going to take that—I appreciate that you want it to be better than that—but I'm going to take that. So, I walk up onto the green, tap in, wave my hand at the imaginary U. S. Open crowd like I had something to do with that shot and walked off of that green. I know now that I had nothing to do with that shot. That was all the result of my caddy. He knew exactly where I needed to hit my shot. He also knew that if I would have aimed at the hole like I wanted then my ball would have slowly rolled off the green and all the way down a hill that I didn't know about.

It was like that the entire round. This guy coached me, he taught me, and he made me a better golfer in just 18 holes. He encouraged me. He kept telling me, repeatedly, that I belonged and made me feel like I belonged. One of the guys who I was playing with would be walking on the fairway when I was in the woods looking for my ball, which happened more than once. But, I was never alone because Mark from Savanna, Georgia was right there the whole time. The guy saved me at least 10 strokes on my round and he gave me this calm confidence. When the round was over and everyone was shaking hands, I went up to Mark and thought about hugging him...no, no let's just shake hands, we don't need to hug, we'll just shake hands.

Now, I'm not saying that the Holy Spirit is like a caddy—not at all. That's not the analogy at all. In fact, that would be selling the Holy Spirit way too short. What I am saying is that I had no idea how advantageous it was to have a caddy because I didn't know what a caddy actually did. Playing golf with a caddy and playing golf without a caddy—two different worlds, I know that now. That can be true with us concerning the Holy Spirit. If we don't know what He does, we don't know what we have in us. We don't know how advantageous He is. But, if we can grasp the ministry of the Holy Spirit then He will give us a calm confidence in a very chaotic and troubled world.

In chapter 14 we get the promise of the Holy Spirit. And this chapter is all about assurance. The first role of the Holy Spirit is that He gives Christians assurance that they are adopted sons or daughters of God. Look at verse 18 real quick. Underline this, circle it, highlight it whatever you have to do—you can do all three. It says, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." The Holy Spirit will assure you that you are an adopted son or daughter of God if you are in Christ.

Do you know the Christian name for God? I'm not talking about Jesus—that's not where I'm going. Do you know what the Christian name for God is? Is it Lord? Is it Yahweh? Is it The Great I Am like we see in Exodus 3? Is it Jehovah? Is it El Shaddai? Is it Immanuel? These are all names that are attributed to God in the Old Testament. Names with incredible meaning and power behind them but none of them are the Christian name for God. The Christian name for God is Father. It's Father.

This is what separates Christ and Christianity from every other world religion and for that matter every other ideology. It's this idea that God is our Father—our adoptive Father. And if the Christian name for God is Father, I realize that for some of you that is an instant turn off. Maybe your dad left. Maybe he was physically present but he was never there. Maybe you never heard your father say, "I love you." Maybe you never heard your dad say, "Thank you for being my blessing." Maybe you never heard your dad say, "I'm so glad that you are my son." Or, "I'm so glad that you are my daughter." Maybe your dad abused you in every single way that a human being possibly can.

So, when you hear that the Christian name for God is Father, your response is, "Alright, I'm out." If that's the case, it's understandable. I get it. But let me just say this. You can take the greatest dad in the world, whoever he is, and I'm sure he has a coffee mug on his desk to remind him—whoever the greatest father in the world is, he falls far, far short of the bar that God sets as Father. Even my best moments as a father are nothing more than blurry reflections of the goodness of the God the Father.

Now, I love my kids—I love my kids. I would lay down in traffic for them. But as much as I love them, as much as I want to be an amazing father to them, there have been and there will be times that I fail them. There will be times when I fail my kids. God the Father never will. At times I will fall very, very short. God the Father will only surpass. There will even be times when I wound my kids. God the Father will only heal.

The assurance that we get from the Holy Spirit is that if you're an adopted son or daughter of God that means that God the Father will never leave you, or abuse you, or neglect you, He will never deny you. Instead, adoption and the gospel are the assurances of your salvation. And if God was willing to send His only Son, Jesus, to die for you—how valuable you must be to Him that through the cross, out of all ways the cross is how He went to pay the adoption fee for you.

We were not born into this divine privilege or inheritance. We certainly didn't earn it. You cannot earn adoption. No adopted child ever earns their family. No they are picked despite their circumstances, despite their past, despite their flaws—a father comes in and says, "You, you're mine. I love you. You are my son, you're my daughter—that will never change." There's a verse in a song that we sing around here that I absolutely love. It says, "Who makes the orphan a son or daughter?" Jesus does. Hear the hope in that, hear that hope.

The greatest blessing in the gospel is justification—being declared justified, being declared innocent before God. That is the greatest blessing in the gospel. The greatest privilege in the gospel is adoption. And know this, for you the adoption fee was paid for in full at the cross of Jesus Christ. And at the cross there is no buyer's remorse. The promise of the Holy Spirit is the promise of adoption.

So maybe what Jesus is telling the disciples right here, in some of His last moments with them, maybe He's saying, "Hey, what I'm about to go do. I'm about to go buy you. I'm about to go and pay the adoption fee for you so that no longer are just my disciples but now you will also be My eternal adopted family. The Holy Spirit will remind you that, if you are in Christ, you are always most whole. That's one of

the things He will do, especially when the world, and Satan, and your flesh will deny you and say that you are not. There will be times when the world will deny your adoption. It will happen.

Satan will certainly try to convince you that you are not. And there will even be times, usually when you see your sin and your brokenness, that you yourself will try to deny that you are adopted because, “Look at who I am. Look at what I have done. Look at how far short I fall. There is no way that God can adopt me. There is no way—at the very least He should disown me.” At times you might play the part of the prodigal but God will always, always, always play the part of the prodigal’s father.

Listen to Romans 8:14. This passage echoes assurance, “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.”

The first role of the Holy Spirit is to remind you that if you’re in Christ then you are an adopted son or daughter of God. Meaning this, the Holy Spirit will always trump the paralyzing fear of being alone with the assurance of being adopted—always.

So, if you’re in Christ you’re never, never alone. You’re not alone when your child is in the hospital. You’re not alone when all of your friends are married and you’re not. You’re not alone if your spouse leaves you. You’re not alone at work. You’re not alone at school. You’re not alone even when you’re standing over a fresh grave. You’re not alone in the middle of persecution. You’re not even alone when you face death. Even if you can’t feel the presence of Christ He is still in you. That’s the promise of what the Holy Spirit will do.

Flip the page to chapter 16. We’re going to look at another role right here. Has everyone heard the expression, “ignorance is bliss”? We’ve all heard that, right? There are times in life that I believe that that statement is 100 percent, absolutely true. And usually it’s when I hear disaster coming down from upstairs in my kid’s rooms. I don’t want to know who did what. I don’t want to know who peed where. That was yesterday at our house. I don’t want to know who took what random object and made it into a weapon to assault his sibling. I don’t want to know—I just don’t want to know.

Not knowing or pretending like it didn’t happen or isn’t happening—that’s a much more blissful option at times. Can I get an “Amen”? But as we all know, in reality, and more importantly in the gospel “ignorance is bliss” is a card that nobody gets to play because what we don’t know will certainly hurt us. This is where the role of the Holy Spirit comes in.

Start in verse 8. This is Jesus talking, “And when He comes,” meaning the Holy Spirit, “And when He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see Me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”

So Jesus says right here that the Holy Spirit has a three-part role concerning the world. And the world in this verse is talking about anyone who is outside of Christ. It’s talking about non-Christians. Jesus says the Holy Spirit is going to come to give the correct perception of Him, a correct perception of righteousness, and a correct perception of judgment. And I think that we would all agree that all of us, everyone—at times our perceptions of those three things get muddled. They change, they get blurry, right?

So Jesus says that the first thing is this, the Holy Spirit will come to convict us of sin. And usually our reaction to that is, “Uh, really?” But as we look at the world and how it continues to go, and if we study the history of the world, the perception of sin has changed drastically over the Centuries. It goes all over the place. It get’s completely muddled. Sin is all the way to becoming completely subjective to it’s irrelevant, to does sin really matter, to does sin even exist? The perceptions go all over the place.

The first role of the Holy Spirit is to give us the resounding answer throughout Scripture that, yes sin does exist, yes we are all guilty of it, and yes it really does matter. So the role of the Holy Spirit in the world is to bring to light sin. But let’s be very clear about something. There is a great difference between conviction and condemnation. Conviction of sin is actually an act of grace. The word for convict in verse 8 is translated to cross examine in a legal sense.

So picture a prosecutor trying to come back and convince—trying to refute false testimony in court. At times the world, Satan, even our flesh is going to argue for sin, that what you are doing is irrelevant. From, “Uh, it’s not sin. It’s not hurting anyone.” to, “Does sin really exist?” The role of the Holy Spirit is to come in and cross examine all of that to show us and to convince us of the truth of sin and the severity of it. If you feel condemned, that’s not the Holy Spirit. That’s the world, that’s Satan, that’s even your flesh. The Holy Spirit convicts, He doesn’t condemn.

The Holy Spirit convicts you of sin in order to bring you out from underneath condemnation. Are you following me? Does that make sense? So the goal of the conviction of sin is to push you to Romans 8:1. That’s the goal. Romans 8:1 says that there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. It’s an act of grace. It’s meant to push you down the path to find relief, which is only found in the mercy of God.

First you have to see the conviction of your sin through the Holy Spirit then the Holy Spirit will show you that righteousness is found only in Jesus. The word “righteous” means right standing with someone or to be presentable. We are all looking for ways to be righteous, right? We’re all looking for ways to make ourselves presentable. Maybe it’s through morality where we are trying to justify ourselves to God—or even to other people—through morals. Maybe you are trying to make yourself presentable through an awesome career. You’re killing it—you’re killing it, you’ve climbed the ladder, “The higher I go up the ladder, hey, the more presentable I am,” right?

Maybe you’re trying to make yourself presentable by being a part of a service project. You go and serve. You take a couple of pictures. You put them up on Instagram. You put them up on twitter with an effort to say, “Okay, here I am. I’m presentable.”

How are you trying to make yourself righteous? How are you trying to make yourself presentable? Morals, awesome career, service—amazing things that you should be a part of, don’t hear me say that they are not. But if your motivation behind those things is to make yourself righteous, let me just say as directly and gently as I can, you will fall very, very short.

Campbell Morgan was a pastor in London and he said this about chapter 16 verse 10, “When Almighty God raised Jesus from the dead, He was saying, ‘This is the Man I accept, and all men unlike Him I reject.’” Wow. So, what Campbell Morgan has done here is to hit on a theme that is sown throughout Scripture. The theme is this. God’s standard for righteousness is Jesus alone.

Anybody want to stand up and say, “Hey, I’m on the same level of righteousness with Jesus based upon my own works?” I don’t want to do that. See, one of the roles of the Holy Spirit would be to convince

you that your righteousness, your personal righteousness will never satisfy—it's only by grasping the righteousness that's found in Jesus that will you be made acceptable to God. And that righteousness is right there for the taking.

So, this awareness, this conviction of sin and righteousness this is all meant by the Holy Spirit to drive you down the path of grace—that's what it is meant for. So are you convinced of sin? Are you convinced of the righteousness that can only be found in Christ? Because, if you are convinced, you probably are saved already or you will be soon.

The third role of the Holy Spirit is the conviction of judgment. This is the one we want to talk about least of all. We don't want to hear about judgment, we don't want to talk about it, and we don't want to think about it. We want to eliminate it from our mindset. That's fine, if we don't want to acknowledge it that's fine.

But just because I don't want to acknowledge the judgment I would face for knocking off a convenience store, that doesn't mean that that judgment doesn't exist. If judgment doesn't exist, what did Jesus save us from on the cross? Why are there verses like John 3:16? "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son so that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life." And then verses like Romans 8:1, "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Why all that?

The Holy Spirit does not convict us of judgment to scare us, He convicts us of it to secure us because you will only know how awesome Jesus is once you have realized what He has saved you from. That's why the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness, and then judgment. It's all an act of grace. It's all to push you down the path of grace.

If you're in Christ, if you are a Christian, put yourself back through that cycle. Remind yourself of your sin not to condemn yourself but to remind yourself of the sin that has already been forgiven and paid for on the cross. Remind yourself that your personal righteousness will never satisfy but the righteousness that you have in Jesus is what makes you acceptable to God.

Remind yourself of the judgment that's already been settled for you on the cross where you are now in God's courtroom and you have been declared innocent. If we keep putting ourselves back through that cycle just with the intention of seeing how great, and how gracious and glorious God is, that's like putting Kevlar on your faith so that the bullets of condemnation that Satan, the world, and even your flesh are going to shoot at you continually—those bullets will never be able to penetrate you.

So if we're given assurance in conviction what's our response supposed to be? How do we respond to this gift of the Holy Spirit? Well, Jesus says multiple times in chapter 14: if you keep My commandments; he who has My words and keeps them; he who loves Me keeps My commandments. Our response is simply obedience. That's all it is.

Here's the awesome thing about chapter 14—this jumped out at me. Jesus never commands obedience. Not once. You will not find a commandment to obey in this chapter. He says, "If you love Me you will keep My commandments...He who loves Me does and keeps My word." Love for Christ gives us assurance that then produces obedience. Obedience is always a response. It's on the back-end of Christ, always on the back-end of Christ.

Here's the question that you have to ask yourself regarding obedience. Do you love Jesus Himself, or do you love the thought of what Jesus can do for you? That's the question that you have to ask yourself. It's a gift. It's a response. The Holy Spirit has given, not gotten. We're given the Holy Spirit, not because we've obeyed. It's simply because we have love for Christ, which produces obedience. That's what Jesus is getting at. Obedience to Christ does not produce love. Love for Christ produces obedience. Are you following me?

So if you're trying to manufacture love for Christ by keeping a list of commandments, if you think that love for Christ is going to come out of your obedience that's a burden that you will crumble under. You will probably become disillusioned, most likely become bitter—that's religion. I obey therefore I am loved. I obey to get something in return. And Jesus is saying, "No, no, no. It's none of that. Just come to experience Me. Love Me because I so greatly love you." And that love will give birth to a faith that will produce repentance and obedience.

Christian obedience isn't, "I have too." Christian obedience is, "I get too." So what is your motivation behind obedience? If there's love and joy attached to it that's a really good sign, but if there is just obligation and a sense of guilt why are you really trying to obey? Honestly, there are much better things to do with your life that to accomplish a cold, religious checklist out of obligation. That sounds terrible. I don't want that. Might as well eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we will die.

Obedience to a religious checklist can't be what Jesus meant in John 10 when it says, "I've come to give you life and have life abundantly." That's not what it means. To live in Christ, to live abundantly can't mean joyless, obligated obedience. That's contrary to all of Scripture. Yet, far too often that's exactly what we make it. Or maybe that's what we think that it is. I know that I personally have fallen into that rut.

Obedience birthed out of love and joy can only come when you experience the love of Christ first and then, by faith, you surrender your sin, your shame, your guilt, your past, present and future, your life to Him and know that you are an accepted, adopted son or daughter of God the Father through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

There is nothing, absolutely nothing—death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor past or present things to come, no power, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all of creation will be able to separate us from God the Father through the love of Jesus Christ. When you're overtaken by that love, then there is no other response other than loving, joyful obedience. That doesn't mean that obedience won't be hard. But it does mean that obedience goes from obligation to response. So is your obedience obligated or is it a response?

Jesus says in 16, verse 7, "Hey, it's to your advantage that I go because if I do not go away then the Helper won't come." That verse has always baffled me. I think it probably did the same thing to the disciples. It really seems hard to believe that there is something more advantageous, that there is something better than having Jesus, in the flesh, right next to you. That just seems hard to believe. But that's exactly what He says. He says, "No, no, no, no it's better for you that I go. It's more to your advantage that I leave."

So, I have this list of questions that I'm compiling that I want to ask the Lord in heaven one day, questions that the answers don't really matter right now but I'm so curious that I want to know. Stuff like, "God, what was it like creating the world? What was your process like? Cats—seriously? Why?"

Don't email me." But on a serious note, God, why, why, why did the Seahawks pass on second down from the one? God, why? In Your infinite wisdom, You're the only One who will know the answer to that question." Then I want to ask all of the questions we're all asking, right?

I also want to talk to some of the guys in Scripture and ask them some questions, "Hey, Moses. What was it like to see God part the Red Sea right in front of you? What was it like to see the presence of God in a pillar of fire leading you through the desert at night? What was that like?"

"Elijah, come here what was it like to see God rain down fire from heaven and blow up the alter of Baal in front of all of the prophets of Baal just so that He could flex and say, 'I'm the one true God.' I mean, did you just mic drop and walk off and say, "What's up? What's up? What was that like?"

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego what was it like to stand in a fiery furnace that's burning hot, on fire, standing next to the Angel of the Lord and then walking out completely unharmed? What was that like?"

In one of my favorite verses at the very end of the gospel of John, John said that Jesus did so many more things that weren't written down because the world could not contain the amount of books that would be written—that sounds awesome. I want to know about that. I want to ask about that.

Here's how I think that conversation would go down in heaven one day. I get those guys together and I think that this is what they are going to say, "Yeah, yeah parting the Red Sea—it was cool. Pillar of fire, blowing up the alter, fiery furnace—yeah, all of that stuff was really cool. It was great. But forget all of that. Tell us, what was it like to have the Holy Spirit?" That's what they are going to ask us.

These men of God who got to see incredible, miraculous acts—God working. And they got to see them with their own eyes. I think they would put that stuff up pretty high. But compared to the fact of having that same power—the power of the God Who performed those things residing in you, I think they would put that up a lot higher. We see it at the same level.

Are we humble, and in awe, and full of joy for the fact that the same power that resurrected Christ from the dead resides in us? Do we know what we have in the Holy Spirit? Do we know how advantageous He is? Do we know what He does? Or do we at least want to know what He does? Are you listening to His voice as He fulfills His roles? May we hear the whisper of the Holy Spirit as He assures us and convicts us. That's my prayer for you today. And may we take joy in the fact that it is much better to have the Spirit in us than to have Jesus in the flesh next to us.

Right now we're going to enter into a time of communion when we get to reflect upon all of that. So, if you're in Christ this is your chance to put yourself back through that cycle. Remind yourself of how your sin has been paid for and forgiven because of the blood that was spilled on the cross. That's what the juice represents. That's what the broken bread represents.

Remind yourself that your righteousness, your personal righteousness will never satisfy. But the righteousness that we have in Christ—that's what makes you acceptable to God. Remind yourself of the judgment that has already been settled on your behalf, and how the gavel has been slammed down, and you have been declared innocent. Communion is a time for brothers and sisters in Christ to get to go and to have a meal at our adoptive Father's table.

I'm going to pray for us and then the servers are going to come.

Father, how awesome and humbling it is to come into Your throne room and call You Father. Thank You. Father I pray right now that Your Spirit moves and is poured out on us. Fill us with Your Spirit. And, if we're in Christ, that we would know Who You are and what we have in the Holy Spirit. That we would hear His voice as He assures us that we are Your adopted sons and daughters. That we would feel the peace that Jesus promises us and the security that we are not alone.

And Father, I pray that Your Spirit would move to convict. That there would be someone here who is pushed down the path of grace by the Holy Spirit right now and that he or she would see that You are standing here right now with Your arms wide open and saying, "Come to me. I want you. I paid for you."

Father, I pray that we never lose sight of how much better it is to have Your Spirit in us. It's so easy to get caught up reading the Scripture and think, "Man, if only I could have seen that. If only I could have seen the resurrected Christ. If only I could have seen the parted Red Sea, then I would have faith, then my faith would be stronger."

But Jesus says, "No, it's much better." Later on, God, You promised that those who believe in Jesus would be more blessed than the ones who haven't seen Him. All of us here, we have never physically seen Christ. Father, I pray that You would bless us and give us comfort and the assurance that it's much better to have what You have given us than what we think we could have had in the Bible. I'm guilty of that ,Father. Forgive me for my lack of faith when I think that that would have been better than what You have already set up for us. Thank You for the gift of Your Spirit. We love you. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.