

The Cure for Troubled Hearts (Part 2)

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John: The Jesus I Never Knew Series

John 14

Do you know someone who is really difficult to shop for? Not because they have very specific taste; I'm not talking about the fussy person who returns all of your gifts because they're not the exact shade of pink that they prefer, or they really don't like dark wood, so the dark wood picture frame is either stuck in a drawer or thrown out.

Do you know anyone who is really difficult to shop for because they don't need anything? I drive my kids crazy because they ask me, "Dad, what do you want for Father's Day?" Or "What do you want for your birthday?" And I always respond the same way, "I really don't need anything. Save your money." Or if I really want to drive them crazy, I'll say, "Well, what would really make me happy is if you read your Bible every day." Or, "If you did these specific chores around the house..."

They say, "I'm not asking about chores, Dad. What do you want me to buy for you?"

"I don't know, I have everything I need."

Parents are particularly difficult to buy things for, especially if they are elderly. Very often elderly people have a certain routine and they aren't particularly interested in varying it. My mother-in-law eats the same thing for breakfast every day. She eats the same lunch every day. She won't use the garbage disposal because it may clog up the pipes. She won't use the dishwasher in her house because it really doesn't get the dishes as clean as she wants them. We wanted to buy her a push button phone. And even though she has some arthritis in her hands, she insists on using a rotary phone because she doesn't trust push button phones.

We bought her a VCR. Forget about that. The only movies she likes to see are ones she's already seen, and why bother seeing what you've already seen? My mother-in-law still boils water on the stove in a pot to make coffee. She has to pick up this hot glass pot with an ovenmit. We've tried to buy her another coffee pot. She doesn't like the way the coffee tastes. She doesn't really like nick-knacks or pictures because they collect dust, and a German home has to be clean enough to do surgery in, or make microchips for a computer.

We always end up buying her the same thing – jam. We’ve bought her jam in Rome. We bought her Scandinavian jam. Jam from England, jam from Scotland, jam from San Antonio, jam with little Mexican sombreros on them.

Do you know anyone you find really difficult to shop for because they don’t need or want anything at all?

Of course, part of the challenge is that we live in America where people have such an enormous abundance of things. How many of you have basements or garages or attics filled with boxes of things that you haven’t looked at for years? Just stuff, boxes of stuff.

Of course, around the world the situation is far different. In many countries there is a need for the most basic of necessities – a need for clean drinking water, a need for food for yourself or family, a need for basic medical attention, or the most basic kind of shelter. I watched the news the other day and saw refugees fleeing from the civil war in Liberia. They just arrived at the border carrying everything they could carry from their homes on their heads. When shots rang out, these refugees, who were carrying all of their worldly possessions on their heads, had to throw their possessions down and run for the border so that they wouldn’t be killed. Men, women, and children literally lacked any material goods whatsoever – no pots, pans, soap, food, extra clothes, or diapers.

What do you need? In the last century there’s been an enormous amount of literature written about human needs. There has been a recognition that we human beings need more than material for physical survival. We need more than food and clothing and a warm place to sleep. There is a recognition that people do not do well unless they feel loved. We need to feel like we are making a meaningful contribution. In other words, we need to feel needed.

How many elderly people have sunk into depression, or simply have given up the will to live because they no longer feel needed? They no longer feel like they are making a meaningful contribution.

We need to feel like there is a way for us to deal with our mistakes. Of course, like everything else in contemporary life, our needs have been multiplied to the point of absurdity. We’ve become like Bob in that movie, “What About Bob?” – I need, I need, I need...

We need to be recognized, otherwise there’s no way for us to continue to do a job, or to volunteer. We constantly need to be thanked and stroked. We need managers who will motivate us because we can’t be self-motivated to do a great job. We need teachers who will keep us interested in the subject. It is not our fault that we’re failing school. It’s the teacher’s fault. Every child needs to get an award, no matter how they’ve performed.

And every single person who does anything worthwhile in America needs to be called a “hero.” If you are in the Army, by definition, you are a hero. If you are a firefighter, or a police officer, or a father, or a mother – we need to call everyone heroes.

Despite our overly extravagant use of the word “need,” we do have needs. Jesus addresses us at the level of our most fundamental needs in a passage that we began to study last week. I’ve called today’s talk, “The Cure for Troubled Hearts Part 2.” Let’s pray.

John 14:1-6 “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.”

You’ll recall that in John 13 Jesus has made three shocking announcements to his followers. He tells his followers at the Last Supper that he is about to be betrayed by one of them. He tells his followers that he, their leader, is going away and they can’t follow him immediately. And third, he tells his followers that so much pressure will be brought to bear on them, his departure is going to be so traumatic, that they will deny ever knowing him.

I will be betrayed.

I’m going away.

You, my closest friends, will deny me.

These three statements form the context, then, of John 14, *Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me.*

The disciples are confused. They are anxious. Their hearts are troubled. The picture of the troubled heart is that of a boat that is storm-tossed. Their emotions are in a swirl.

Certainly one of the components to the disciples’ troubled hearts was the extreme feeling of loneliness at the announcement of Jesus’ departure. No group of men ever shared a closer bond for three years than Jesus did with his followers. He modeled for them life together. He taught them. He gave these men a purpose for living. He engaged them in a great mission. They got to watch extraordinary miracles. And he empowered them to do many of these

miracles themselves. He was transparent with them. He explained life. He gave hope.

And then he said he was going. Certainly one of the feelings that the disciples must have had at the announcement of Jesus' departure was a feeling of loneliness.

What is your picture of loneliness? Is it a homeless person sitting in a doorway in the winter with a cheap blanket wrapped around his or her shoulders? What's your picture of loneliness? Is it old people sitting by themselves on a bench at the mall, not waiting for anyone to come out of the store? Is it an immigrant who recently moved to Central Ohio and doesn't know English, and doesn't have family or friends here?

When you think of someone who is lonely, do you think of a person in a nursing home, or a widow or widower who recently lost his or her spouse?

Loneliness doesn't have anything to do with being alone. One of the most common human experiences is to feel lonely in a crowd. Singles often believe that marriage will cure feelings of loneliness. Some of the loneliest people I've ever met are married people. Many people feel terribly lonely in their marriages. And they feel terribly lonely in big families. In fact, talk with kids who grew up in a family of 7-8 children. They often feel lost in the crowd. It doesn't matter if you live in an apartment building or a dormitory, or if your job involves working in a building with hundreds of other people. You can feel lonely, because loneliness doesn't have anything to do with having other people around you. It is a feeling of being unrelated, alienated, isolated, cut off from others who may be around you.

People try so many ways to relieve loneliness. They join groups – support groups, book clubs. We take up various hobbies and get involved in sports. We get on the internet and participate in a chat room. Why do people converse anonymously with someone else online? Because we are lonely.

Jesus understands that at the root of loneliness is homesickness for God. He says in verse 2, *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, I will come back and take you to be with me so that you also may be where I am. 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."*

Loneliness is homesickness for God. Are you familiar with the word "nostalgia?" Today when people talk of nostalgia, they generally mean remembering old TV shows. We get nostalgic about TV shows that we watched when we were children – "Leave It To Beaver," or "Ozzy and Harriett," or if you are a little younger, "The Brady Bunch."

We get nostalgic about the music we grew up with. Sometimes certain smells can make a person nostalgic. If your mother baked and you smelled cookies coming out of the oven, or bread being baked, or the smell of honeysuckle as you take a walk, or the smell of clothes that have been dried outside, it can produce in you feelings of nostalgia.

But nostalgia doesn't mean the remembrance of old TV shows, old music, or old smells. The word "nostalgia" is made up of two Greek words, "nostos," which means to return home, and "algos," which means severe pain. Nostalgia literally means the experience of severe pain that comes from a desire to return home.

Jesus recognizes that the disciples' loneliness is rooted in something deeper, a homesickness for God. They're feeling true nostalgia – severe pain because they want to return home. So Jesus says, *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.* I'm going home.

Years ago, Tom Wolfe wrote a novel in which he said, "You can't go home again." He was announcing a truth that having left home, you can never return, because your memories and the feelings you had growing up can never be recaptured even when you return. Even if things at home haven't changed, you've changed. You can't go home again.

Jesus says you can go home again. He left us to prepare a home for us. And he says in verse 3, *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 can go home again. The feelings of nostalgia that you have are signposts in you pointing to a deeper need in you, a need for a home. Underneath all loneliness is homesickness.

It is amazing how much of creation has a homing instinct. Salmon swim hundreds of miles up waterfalls, over dams, to return home to the place they were spawned. Swallows return home traveling literally thousands of miles to the place of their birth. Every once in a while, you will read a story about a family who lost a cat and then had to move hundreds of miles away. And somehow six months later, a year later, the cat will show up at their new house. It's amazing how much of creation has a homing instinct.

I believe, friends, that every human being has a homing instinct built into him or her by God. Our feelings of loneliness are merely intimations, suggestions of the deeper pain inside, the pain of homesickness.

Jesus claims to be the way home. We talked about our heavenly home last week. But in this text, Jesus tells us not only that our homesickness, the real issue below all feelings of loneliness, will one day be solved as we enter our heavenly home, he tells us that there is a cure for our homesickness now.

Look down at verses 16-18 with me. *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever- the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.*

And then look at verse 23, *Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."*

Not only is a home being prepared for you in the future with the Triune God – Father, Son and Spirit, but Jesus says a home is being prepared in you in the present. And that Father, Son and Spirit will dwell in you. He tells us that he's sending his Spirit to be with us, to be in us, and then he says in verse 23, *We will come to him.* The Father and Son will come to you and make our home in your.

A home in heaven. A home inside. A home in the future. A home right now.

Are you lonely? Are you homesick? Have you ever considered that your heart could really be a home for God, so that wherever you were, whatever your situation or circumstance, you could be home? You could be on the other side of the globe and still be home. Have you received Christ into your heart and made a home inside for Christ? Do you cultivate your heart, making sure that you deal with issues of purity, obedience, and forgiveness so that your heart really could be Christ's home?

Christ not only offers us the way home, he declares he's the Truth. Verse 6, *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

We live in a world where everyone has a different perspective on everything. Just listen to the news regarding Kobe Bryant and the sexual assault claim. "Well, the woman was insane. She tried to commit suicide before." "The woman is the sweetest girl in the world. She would never lie." "She must be a gold-digger." "He's already admitted to adultery, what else is he guilty of?" "Kobe is a good man."

You never know about athletes. We've been disappointed so many times before. What makes us think we're not going to be disappointed again?

We live in a world where every single story or issue has multiple perspectives and viewpoints. The war in Iraq is a just war. It's an unjust war. We should be there. We shouldn't be there. The President lied. The President is telling the truth.

We have a need to be able to put a stake in the ground and say “This is real. It’s not just a matter of my perspective. This ground that I’m standing on is firm. This is solid. This is in accordance with reality.”

Lots of people dismiss the idea that there could be any truth. A few years ago my wife and I were sitting at Borders having coffee together, reading some books. I heard one of the servers at Borders loudly proclaiming her beliefs that there was nothing that was true. That everything was a matter of opinion and perspective. She and another woman were discussing this, both agreeing, that all truth was relative.

Marlene saw me squirming in my seat. She said, “Go ahead. Go talk with them. You are driving me crazy watching you roll around in your seat, muttering to yourself.”

I walked up to the woman and said, “Excuse me, I really hate to butt in [of course, I don’t], but I just heard you talking and I was really interested in what you were saying. Do you really think that all truth is a matter of perspective?”

She said, “Well, definitely I do.” The other girl nodded her head.

I said, “So you don’t think that there’s anything that is absolute – absolutely right, or absolutely wrong?”

“Definitely not.”

“Would you be willing to say that to a Jewish person, who lost his whole family in the Holocaust?”

They didn’t know who they were talking with. The girl began to stammer, she said, “Well, no.”

I said, “So you are willing to agree that gassing Jewish babies is absolutely wrong.”

“Well, of course, we agree with that.”

“And you agree that gassing whole families is wrong. Do you also agree that South African apartheid was absolutely wrong?”

“Yes, of course.”

“And racism is wrong?”

“Yes.”

We then began to talk about why they felt things were wrong and where they got those standards.

There is a popular myth that there is no truth that is final or absolute, ultimate, or universal. And that the claim that there is a final, absolute, and ultimate truth is arrogant. Years ago the Roman Catholic writer, GK Chesterton, observed that in contemporary society our humility has been misplaced. He said, "Humility no longer pertains to self-opinion, where it ought to be. Rather, it pertains to truth, where it ought not to be."

See, humility used to be based upon a person's opinion of themselves. Now, humility is based upon a person's understanding of the truth. Those who claim to have the truth are considered arrogant.

In the discussion about God, who really is being arrogant? I don't know if there's anyone more arrogant than the modern secularist who looks out at a world in which 99% of all people, for 99% of all time, have said that the central issue and concern in life ought to be God and having a relationship with God. I don't know if there's anyone more arrogant than the modern secularist, who looks at 99% of the world for 99% of the time and says, "You are all being so silly, so superstitious."

I don't know if there was anyone more arrogant than me when I didn't believe in God. I looked out at the rest of the world and basically said, "All of you are wasting your lives in some vain, superstitious pursuit of a God who doesn't exist. How silly of all of you. How superstitious to believe that you could connect with a God who doesn't really exist, but is projection of your own imagination? I alone, and the few select authors that I choose to read, am wise enough to know the real truth."

Arrogant? Who is more arrogant than the modern secularist? Or the modern pluralist who says, "Oh, come on now. All of the religions of the world are like blind people feeling a part of the elephant. One person feels the trunk. Another person feels the leg or the tail or the elephant's side."

Who is more arrogant than the person who claims to see the true reality? "I'm in a position to see that there is an elephant, when all of you religious people only see a part of it."

Friend, it is not the Christian who is arrogant when we claim that in Jesus Christ we have encountered ultimate, final, definitive, absolute truth. Frankly, I believe that a lot of the claims of arrogance have to do more with the style of Christian proclamation than the substance. I have met arrogant Christians. But they were arrogant not because they claimed that in Jesus Christ God revealed himself. They were arrogant because they approached people from a position of superiority, rather than a position of servanthood.

Listen, I don't know if there's been a woman in the last 100 years that had deeper convictions regarding the truth than Mother Teresa. She absolutely believed and preached that she had found the truth about God through Jesus Christ, her Lord. She had absolute convictions regarding the wrongness of abortion, the dignity of life, and the way of salvation. But no one accused Mother Teresa of being arrogant because she proclaimed those convictions by following the style of Jesus. She took the role of a servant.

Your neighbor will not accuse you of being arrogant as a Christian if you mow their lawn. Your family will not accuse you of being arrogant if you make them breakfast or do the dishes. Your roommate won't accuse you of being arrogant if you clean the apartment, or fill their car with gas.

What if we followers of Jesus were absolutely firm in our conviction about the truth and related that truth in a spirit of servanthood and graciousness?

The claim that in Christ we have the final, absolute, definitive, ultimate truth is not intolerant. Currently, the meaning of tolerance appears to be that you don't believe anything very strongly at all. Tolerance is simply not an issue for a follower of Jesus. Followers of Christ should never manipulate people to accept Christ. We don't use money or aid or the promise of a job to induce people to accept Christ. We invite people using sweet reasonableness to receive what God has done through Jesus, namely accomplish salvation for us.

The claim that final absolute truth is in Christ is not an ethnic or racial claim. In other words, we are not saying that America, or the West, is the only biblical culture. There has been a problem historically when Christianity was confused with westernizing or Americanizing. Christian missionaries went to Africa and demanded that Africans wear western style dress and worship in New England style church buildings.

We are not claiming, as Christians, that American cultural patterns, our individualism, our materialism, our competitiveness, the way we Americans resolve conflicts, the way we communicate is the only appropriate cultural pattern for the whole world. We are not saying that the American approach to life is the Christian approach to life. Other cultures are, in many ways, a lot closer to biblical patterns than America is, if you look at other cultural patterns concerning family ties or community life or the willingness to suffer, or the value placed on people over tasks.

Our claim to truth is not an ethnic or racial claim. And in this, Christianity really differs from Islam. Islam absolutely is the domination of Arab culture over every other culture. The Quran can only be properly read in Arabic. People need to go to Mecca on a pilgrimage.

The Bible can be read in any language. There is no place on earth that God says he must be worshipped. In fact, Jesus said that God doesn't have to be worshipped on this mountain or in Jerusalem. True worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.

The claim that Christ is a final, absolute, definitive, ultimate truth is not just a contemporary problem. Some people say that this claim for Christ was possible when Christians dominated the west, but now with a growing awareness of global religions, a claim that God was uniquely at work through Christ is impossible to maintain. It's important to remember that the problem regarding Christ's uniqueness is nothing new. The apostles all were martyred because they claimed that God was uniquely at work through Jesus Christ. They said there could be no compromise between the worship of Jesus Christ and the worship of the Roman Emperor. They claimed that there was only one Lord, one way, one Name given under heaven by which we must be saved – the name Jesus Christ!

And this claim that God has uniquely worked through Jesus is not something that simply is being announced in the western world. In Sri Lanka, after independence, there were many mainline Protestant churches that decided the best course for the church would be to embrace pluralism. That is to say that Christianity doesn't offer anything unique, that God wasn't uniquely at work through Jesus, that God also revealed himself through Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. For 30 years after independence, the churches in Sri Lanka shrunk and Buddhism grew in power. In the last 15 years, Christianity in Sri Lanka has just exploded. Churches are filled. Hundreds of churches have been planted.

What's happened in the last 15 years? In the face of terrible persecution, imprisonment, beating, martyrdom, some Christians have gone around Sri Lanka saying, "God has uniquely worked through Jesus."

No other name. No other way.

The claim that final, absolute, definitive, ultimate truth is in Christ is not saying that there is no truth or goodness in other religions. Islam insists on justice and prayer. Buddhism insists on self-denial. There are too many true realities in other religions. But for us as Christians, we would say there's partial truth in other religions. Anyone who has studied comparative religion even a little recognizes that in a number of places religious claims are incompatible. The idea that all of the differences in the various religions can be boiled away is simply false for anyone who has ever studied comparative religion. I was a comparative religion major.

For example, Christ tells us to love God with all our hearts, all our minds and all our strength, and to love our neighbor. Buddha says we are our neighbors. Christianity teaches us that God uniquely ultimately worked through his Son Jesus. Islam teaches us that God cannot have a son. Christ said he came to

save us from sin. Other religions claim that sin is an illusion that you need to simply be saved from ignorance.

The claim that in Christ we have final absolute definitive ultimate truth is not merely a psychological claim. We Christians are not saying that we know what must be going on inside the head, inside the heart of an individual in order to be saved. We do not know how much knowledge of Jesus a person must have to be saved. We don't know what level of knowledge, what level of faith, an individual must have. The claim for final, ultimate truth is not what's happening inside of a person. The claim for final ultimate truth is what God has done in Jesus. We're saying no other name, no other way, no other Savior.

Indeed, we are not claiming about our practice of Christianity that there is final, definitive, absolute, ultimate truth. We're not saying the way we worship, the way we organize ourselves, the way we go about doing Christianity is the ultimate truth. We're saying the final truth is in Christ. He is the way, the truth and the life.

And this claim of truth means that all roads do not lead to God. All roads, friends, do not lead to the same place. You cannot get to New York from Columbus by going south, no matter how sincere you are. You cannot get seven from adding 2+2, no matter how hard you try. Just as in the world there are real roads, in the spiritual world there are also real roads to God. We don't create the roads to God, we discover them. Jesus says he is the way, the truth, and the life. If there is a real God, there is a real road to get to the real God.

The early church father, Augustine, said, "There are just two cities. Two loves have made two cities. The love of self to the despising of God has made the city of the world. The love of God to the despising of self has made the city of God. Let a man consult himself to see what he loves and he will find which city he belongs to."

C.S. Lewis made the same point in *The Great Divorce*. He said, "In the end there are only two kinds of people – those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says in the end, 'Thy will be done.'" Lewis went on to say that the world is not made of roads, which if pursued long enough, meet at the center. Rather, we live in a world in which every road after a while forks into two. And after a while, forks into two again. At each fork we make a decision for or against God. Every road does not lead to God. Some of our choices lead away from God. There are only two ultimate destinies – toward God or away from God.

The claim of truth means that sincerity is not enough. I joke in *Newcomers' Class* as we go through this text, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." I've said that some people believe that so long as you are sincere, it's enough. If you were to get on a 747 and you

were a little nervous, but the pilot greeted you at the door and said, "Don't be nervous. Sit down and relax. We're going to have a great flight. By the way, I should tell you that I've never flown one of these big planes before. In fact, I've never flown any plane. In fact, I've never even been in front of a flight simulator. But I sincerely believe that I can fly this plane." How would you feel?

If you were going in for brain surgery and the neurologist said, "Just relax, breathe deeply. By the way, I've never actually operated on anyone's head before. In fact, I've not been to medical school. But I sincerely believe I can do this brain surgery. I've read a few medical books." How would you feel?

If you were going in to have your car brakes worked on and the mechanic said, "Just sit down in the office. Have a cup of coffee. I'll work on your brakes. I've never actually worked on brakes before, but don't worry; I sincerely believe I can do this." How would you feel?

If sincerity won't save you from a plane crash, or dying on an operating room table, or from brake failure, why do people believe that sincerity will save them from their sins? Sincerity is not enough to take away sin any more than sincerity is enough to take away cancer. We need a real doctor to take away cancer and we need a real Savior to take away our sins.

The claim of truth finally means that God is not confused when he reveals himself in Jesus. Listen, if all religions were equally true, then God is confused. If God told Mohammed that everyone must make a pilgrimage to Mecca to please him, and he told Jesus that it doesn't matter where you worship, then he is confused. If God told Moses it was wrong to eat ham, but chicken is OK, and he told the Hindus that it's wrong to eat any meat, you might ask, "What is God's problem?" If God said to some people that it's OK to oppress women, that women shouldn't be seen, except with heavy veils, and women shouldn't be allowed to drive or vote, or work in various occupations, and to other people he said women ought to enjoy the same liberties and rights as men, then God is confused.

Ultimately, the reason we believe that in Christ we have the final truth is because Christianity alone asserts that its founder is God himself. Skip down to verse 7, *"If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."* Philip said, *"Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."* Jesus 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'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe in 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 miracles themselves."*

Philip is saying what we've always needed, what we've always wanted, is to be close to God. Show us God.

I read a story about a man who was asked, "What do you feel is the deepest need in your life?" The man, without hesitation replied, "I need a new God."

"What do you mean you need a new God?" he was asked.

He went on to explain, "During the past few weeks I've heard from you that God loves me, that God is for me, that God has the power to help me in my struggles. That's been difficult for me to hear because of what I've known about God from friends, my family background, from my old church. I've thought a lot about what you said. I've read Bible verses about who God is."

"The other day it hit me. The reason I have so many struggles, the reason why I have so many unmet needs, is because I have the wrong idea about God. I thought of God as being a heavenly policeman who is just waiting for me to mess up. I thought of God as being really far away, very uninterested in my struggles or me. My God has been some conglomerate of my upbringing and my own father and my own church background."

"My God has not been a God of love or a God who will work on my behalf. I need a new God."

Philip comes to Jesus and he says, "Show me God. That's what I've always needed. That's what I've always wanted. I've always wanted to feel close to God. I feel like I need a relationship with God." Like that man in the story, you need a relationship with a new God.

Along the way, we pick up a lot of false ideas about God. Jesus says, "You want to know what God is really like, Philip? Look at me. God is at work in me and through me. If you've seen me, Philip, you've seen God."

Some people say, "I don't believe in God," or "I have trouble believing in God. I have trouble relating to God. I have trouble feeling close to God." I want to ask those folks, "Which God don't you believe in? Which God do you have trouble relating to? Which God do you have trouble feeling close to?"

People ask all the time, "Do you believe in God?" My answer is really simple. It depends upon what you mean by God. Mohammed Ali rejected Christianity and converted to Islam because he claimed, "I can't believe in a blonde, blue-eyed God." Well, I don't believe in a blonde, blue-eyed God either. I don't believe in a God who enjoys watching children suffer. I don't believe in a God who loves sending people to hell. I don't believe in that God either. I don't believe in a conservative Republican God. I don't believe in a distant God who remains uninvolved in your life. I don't believe in a God who doesn't answer prayer. I

don't believe in a God who puts down women. I don't believe in an American God. I don't believe in a Western God. I don't believe in a lot of Gods that people claim are God.

The God whom I believe in is exactly like Jesus. To see Jesus is to see God. God is in Jesus. The Father is in the Son. The Son is in the Father. What have we learned about Jesus? That's what God is like. I believe in a God who is barrier breaker, who breaks dividing walls between the races. I believe in a God who breaks dividing walls between men and women. I believe in a God who breaks dividing walls in marriages. I believe in a God who breaks dividing walls among churches.

I believe in a God who satisfies and quenches our thirst. I believe in a God who stoops down to wash my feet. Who serves me so much that he breaks my heart. I believe in a God who revealed himself finally and ultimately in Jesus Christ.

After the French Revolution there were a number of Frenchmen who tried to start new religions. They said that Christianity was destined for the garbage dump and they needed to start new religions. None of these new religions caught fire. No one was attracted to the new religions.

One of the founders of one of the new religions went to the great French statesman, Talleyrand, and said, "What do I need to do to get people to follow me and my new religion?"

Talleyrand said, "It's easy for you to get followers for your new religion. All you need to do is get yourself crucified and on the third day rise from the dead."

I believe in the God who revealed himself in Jesus. I believe in the God, Jesus, who was crucified for our sins and was raised from the dead on the third day. He is the one through whom all of our needs can be met. Let's pray.

The Cure for Troubled Hearts (Part 2)

Rich Nathan

July 26-27, 2003

John: The Jesus I Never Knew Series

John 14

- I. We Need a Cure for Loneliness (Jn. 14:1-6, 16-18, 23)
- II. We Need Truth (Jn. 14:6)
 - A. The Claim of Truth is:
 - 1. Not Arrogant
 - 2. Not Intolerant
 - 3. Not Ethnic or Racial
 - 4. Not Just a Contemporary Problem
 - 5. Not Saying There is no Truth or Goodness in Other Religions
 - 6. Not a Psychological Claim
 - B. The Claim of Truth Means:
 - 1. All Roads Don't Lead to God
 - 2. Sincerity is not Enough
 - 3. God is not Confused
- III. We Need a Cure for Boredom (Jn. 14:6, 12-14)
- IV. We Need a New God (Jn. 14:7-11)