“BELIEVE IN ME”

John 14:1–31

Key Verse: 14:1

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me.”

At this Passover meal the disciples had just heard some unsettling news. One of them would betray him (13:21). Jesus would be with them just a little while longer, and where he was going, they could not come (13:33). Before the rooster crowed, Peter would disown him three times (13:38). But what really bothered them was that Jesus was leaving. They'd followed him for three whole years. Through living with him, their eyes had opened, and they'd experienced a loving fellowship they never had before. They wanted it to never stop. They couldn’t understand why it had to come to an end now. So in this chapter Jesus comforts them. He repeatedly encourages them to believe in him. The word “believe” is repeated in this chapter seven times, and in the entire Gospel, 95 times. So in this study we want to learn what it really means to believe in Jesus, why we should believe, and what happens when we do.

The chapter begins and ends with Jesus’ words, “Do not let your hearts be troubled” (1a,27b). The disciples were facing troubles, but he repeatedly told them, “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” Jesus himself was troubled by the betrayal, pain and shame he was about to face (12:27; 13:31), but he was struggling not to give in to it. And while *he’s* the one needing comfort, here he is, comforting *them*. He says, “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” It may seem we have no control over our hearts being troubled. But according to Jesus, it’s something we *let* happen or not.

How can we **not let** our hearts be troubled? Read verse 1b. The way to keep our hearts from being troubled is to believe in Jesus. Here the word, “believe,” means to regard as true, or, to put confidence in. We need to believe in the truth of Jesus, to have real confidence in Jesus himself. Jesus encouraged his disciples by saying they already believed in God. Now, they needed to believe in Jesus in the same way they believed in God. Believing in Jesus isn’t superficial, just knowing some theology about him or just agreeing to something about him in our minds; it’s a deep trust in a real person, and it enables us to transcend any unsettling situation. We may be in all kinds of troubles or uncertainties, but when we really believe in Jesus, we can have peace and confidence that everything’s going to be okay.

Jesus didn’t expect his disciples to blindly believe in him; he gave them some amazing promises to bolster their faith and take away all their fears and insecurities. Read verses 2–3. Jesus was saying that though he was leaving now, they wouldn’t be apart from him forever. They would meet up again in the Father’s house. He said, “My Father’s house has many rooms…” The KJV translated it as “many mansions.” Here in the NIV, it sounds like an endless apartment building. But in Greek, the word for “rooms” is literally “places where we remain, stay or dwell.” The same Greek word is in verse 23b, where it is translated as “home.” Here in verses 2–3 Jesus calls it “a place for you.” There’s a permanent place for each of us in the Father’s house. Elsewhere Jesus calls it “eternal dwellings” (Lk16:9). In 2 Corinthians 5:1 Apostle Paul wrote, “For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.” And later in that chapter he describes it as being “at home with the Lord” (2Co5:8).

Read verses 2–3 again. Jesus is explaining here why he’s leaving and where he’s going. He’s going to the Father’s house to prepare a place for each of them. This doesn’t mean he’s going to heaven to start a huge construction project of building heavenly dwellings; he says in verse 2 that the rooms are *already there* in the Father’s house. But surely he doesn’t mean he’s going to heaven as an interior decorator or to provide maid service. Instead, when he said he’s going to “prepare a place,” he was referring to his imminent death and resurrection. Through his death Jesus would become the atoning sacrifice for our sins and our great high priest, so that we can cross over from death to life, join God’s family, and live forever in intimate fellowship with the Holy God (1:29; 5:24; 1Jn1:9; 2:2; Eph5:26–27; Col1:21–22; Heb2:11; 9:12; 10:10,14; 12:14; 13:12). And his resurrection wasn’t just for him; it promises that through his resurrection we, too, will never die; one day he’ll transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body (5:25–26; 11:25; Php3:21).

Let’s read verses 2–3 once more. The final thing to note here is that Jesus promises to come back and take them to be with him. He says it again in verse 28. Throughout the New Testament we find this same promise that Jesus will come again someday (e.g. Mt24:3,27,30,37,39; 26:64; Mk13:26; 14:62; Lk21:27; 1Th4:15; 5:23; 2Th2:1ff; Heb10:37; Jas5:7–8; 1Pe1:13; 2Pe1:16; 3:4; 1Jn2:28; Rev1:7; 22:7,12,20). Generally it’s depicted as a great and glorious day that includes multitudes of people. But here in John 14 Jesus describes it as something very personal: “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” (3). Jesus was making this personal promise to his disciples, and he’s still making it to each person who believes in him. He’s coming back for each one, and he promises to take each of us to be with him, never to be separated again. To believe in Jesus means to really believe this promise. It can’t be a group thing; we’ve got to accept it personally. The promise of a permanent dwelling in the Father’s house and that Jesus is coming back to take us to be with him are some of the most comforting words in the Bible. Jesus told his followers that in this world we’ll have all kinds of trouble (Mt6:34; Mk4:17; Jn16:33). But this world is not all there is. When we believe Jesus’ words about the Father’s house and about his coming back to take us there with him, our hearts will not be troubled, no matter what kinds of things we have to go through in this world.

Jesus goes on to say, “You know the way to the place where I am going” (4). But Thomas responds, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” (5) John’s Gospel is the only place in the Bible that really tells us about Thomas (11:16; 14:5; 20:24­–29). He’s portrayed mainly as a literalist. He’s not impressed with Jesus’ seemingly flowery words about “the Father’s house.” He wants an address, a specific location. How does Jesus respond to his question? Read verse 6. Jesus gave these words not to the crowds, but to his disciples. They would be living in a confusing, turbulent world without him, so they really needed to hear these words, not only so that they could keep on following him, but also so that they could help others. When Jesus said, “You know the way,” he meant, “You know *me*.” **Jesus** is the way because he’s the only way back to our Father God. **Jesus** is the truth because he alone reveals the truth about God, ourselves and the world. **Jesus** is the life because he alone gives eternal life to all who believe in him (11:25; 3:16). When we follow Jesus the way, at first it’s an act of faith—we’re not really sure. But as we follow Jesus the way, he gradually reveals to us the truth, more and more. His truth gives us deep conviction in our faith. And as we come to know Jesus the truth, we receive abundant life now, and eternal life in heaven. It’s not something we have to prove; it’s something we need to believe. To really believe in Jesus means to believe he’s the way, the truth and the life.

Jesus goes on to say in verse 7, “If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” Here Jesus makes a profound statement about the Trinity. When we see Jesus, we see the Father. 1:18 says, “No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.” It was something Jesus had already said on various occasions. Jesus told the Jews, “If you knew me, you would know my Father as well” (8:19). He said in 12:25, “The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me.”

Look at verse 8. Philip responds, “Lord, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us.” John’s Gospel also repeatedly tells us about Philip (1:43,45–46; 6:5–7; 14:8–14). He’s portrayed as a very smart man who knows a lot. It seems that with his smartness he calculated, got frustrated and couldn’t do much. So when he first called him, Jesus challenged him, “Follow me.” Jesus had hope for Philip. In chapter 6 Philip was the one Jesus addressed about feeding the crowd. Jesus hoped that Philip could join him in doing God’s work. But at that time, too, Philip was just too smart. He calculated how much it would cost to feed the crowd and gave up. Philip just liked to jump to a conclusion and have the right answer, ignoring the process. So here he says, “Just show us the Father, and that will be enough for us.” He wasn’t interested in the Father’s house, in where Jesus was going or in the way—he just wanted to see the Father. Because of his smartness, he didn’t really listen to what Jesus had just said, “If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him *and have seen him*.”

What did Jesus say to him? Read verses 9–11. Out of his love Jesus rebuked him. He repeated what he’d just said—that seeing him is seeing the Father. In this chapter Jesus repeatedly says that he’s in the Father, and that the Father is in him (10,11,20; cf. 10:38; 17:21). Jesus had revealed this to his disciples very clearly, through his words and his works. Jesus said things that only could have come from God the Father. Jesus did things that only God the Father could do. Jesus’ own presence revealed God the Father to them, because the Father was living in him. Believing in Jesus means believing that the Father is in Jesus, and that Jesus is in the Father. Jesus said back in 10:30, “I and the Father are one.” This is why he said back in verse 1b, “You believe in God; believe also in me.”

When we believe in Jesus, we not only overcome having a troubled heart. We not only have assurance of a place in the Father’s house, and assurance that Jesus is coming back to take me to be with him there. We not only believe that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. Let’s read verse 12. Jesus said these words to Philip, but he’s saying them to each of us as well. When we believe in Jesus, we begin to do the works Jesus did. We begin to bring God’s healing to people, especially spiritual healing. We begin to plant faith in people as Jesus did. We begin to help people follow Jesus as his disciples. We become good shepherds of his sheep. Jesus’ time on earth was limited, but his disciples could do greater works than he, not in quality but in quantity. How can we believe in Jesus and do his works? It’s when we pray. Read verses 13–14.

In verses 15–31 Jesus mainly talks about loving him. The disciples were so sad Jesus said he was leaving, because they loved him. But their love was mainly emotional. Jesus taught that true love for him means obeying his commands. Jesus comforts them by saying that if they loved and obeyed him, they would receive the Spirit of truth. The Spirit would dwell in them, enable them to “see” Jesus spiritually and be spiritually alive. He would reveal God the Father and Jesus the Son to them in a permanent way. He would remind them of everything Jesus said and give them peace. Believing in Jesus means loving him by obeying his words, and it leads to being filled with Spirit and to real inner peace.