



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

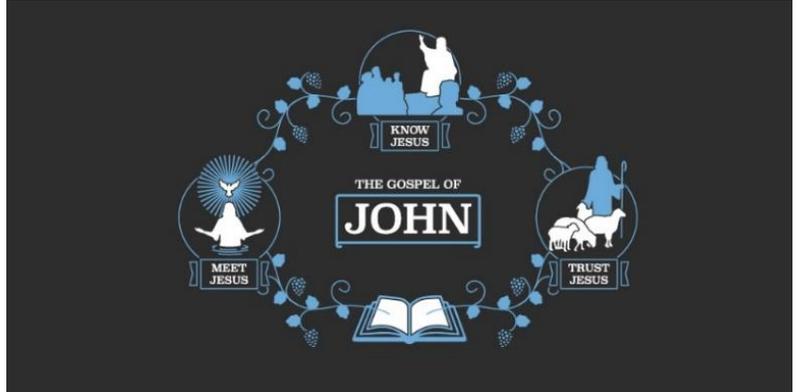
SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Something To Believe In

The Gospel of John

John 14:1–14

Tim Badal | April 3, 2022



It's a pleasure to have each and every one of you with us this morning. Take God's Word in your hands and turn to John 14. We're in a series we've entitled simply

"The Gospel of John." The Apostle John lived with Jesus and walked with Him. He heard Jesus' sermons and saw Him do great signs and wonders. This John, who also was Jesus' closest friend and confidant, put pen to paper and wrote this book telling the good news of Jesus. The central theme of this good news is that Jesus had come to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). As we look at John 14 today, I hope we will learn to trust Him more and more.

Bret Michaels' life was the life of a Hollywood star. As long as he could remember, he had longed to be a rock star. In the early '90s, his band "Poison" was one of the hottest bands around. He had everything Hollywood had to offer: fame, fortune, pleasure and possessions. He was living, as he told one reporter, "the greatest dream come true." That is, until his lifelong friend died suddenly. This impacted him greatly. He found himself in bouts of grief and depression. Unable to get past it, he began to look outside his life, asking if there might be something that could bring him some comfort and relief from his sorrow.

In his journey, he did what he did best which was to write lyrics that would express his heart. That's when he wrote the song, "Something to Believe in." It became something of a motto to him, so much so that he had those words tattooed on his arm. For the entire year of 1990, the song stayed on Billboard's Top Ten list. It became an anthem for a world that was seeking something it couldn't find.

Like Bret Michaels, there were many people in that day who were longing for some answers to the troubles they were facing. We too often are seeking something solid to turn to and believe in that might alleviate the pains and questions in our lives and bring purpose to our lives. But Bret never found it. Apparently he's still living the rock 'n roll life. I wonder if he's doing what many of us do, which is to seek that something inside ourselves.

There's a popular adage that says, "When you need something to believe in, start with yourself." It sounds good. It's a pick-me-up. But what do you do when your world caves in? What if the questions being pushed on you are too big for the answers you have? All humans are looking for something to believe in. In John 14:1-14, Jesus says clearly that He is the something, or better yet, the Someone in Whom we can put our hope and trust. Before we know what we can believe in, we should ask what it means to believe. Believe is one of John's words, which he uses some 120 times in his Gospel—five times in today's text alone. Essentially the word means to throw oneself completely upon something or someone, trusting that this thing or person will be able to handle it.

Jesus is telling us, "I want you to take all of what you are—all your worries, doubts, fears, problems—and I want you to thrust them upon Me. I promise you that I can handle them." He also said this in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He is telling us, "I am the answer to all your problems."

We sometimes hear this sort of thing from various politicians, but they are not being truthful. They cannot provide the answer to our problems. Or we might look for this in a relationship, thinking, "If I can just marry this person, or at least be friends with that

person, they'll be able to address my problems." Sometimes we take a job expecting solutions to our troubles, thinking "If I only had this position, or this amount of money, everything would be fine."

Jesus says, "Those are all failed substitutes. I alone can handle anything you throw My way." He told His disciples this at a very critical point in time. For the first 12 chapters in the Gospel of John, they were experiencing their best life. They were welcomed into a special group to follow this unusual Rabbi. It was a great ride. He had taught them in ways they'd never heard before. He spoke of how God loved them and had a purpose for their lives. He told them He was the Messiah Who had come to bring life and everything they were looking for. More than that, they had witnessed amazing signs and wonders.

They were pinching themselves and one another, Did you see what I saw? That dude just walked out of the tomb." "We started with five loaves and two fish, then it just kept feeding people." "Did you see that He turned water into wine?" "Did you see that man by the temple who had been paralyzed for 38 years and now he's walking? Can you believe this?" It's easy to believe in someone who does everything well. In fact, it's easy to believe when there's victory.

At the end of John 13 and into John 14, things began to change. Judas betrayed Jesus, their brother and companion. They had walked and talked and lived together, but now he would betray with a kiss the Rabbi they had come to love. He would turn Jesus over to the authorities.

Jesus also told them at the end of chapter 13 that He would be leaving them. They thought He would stay for many more years. They thought He was building a Kingdom and would evict the Roman government, but now He was talking about leaving. Peter then said what the others were thinking: "No matter if everyone else leaves You, I'll stick with You." Then Jesus responded to him, "Within the next 12 hours, you're going to deny Me three times."

So now we come to chapter 14 with a bunch of disciples who were wondering what to believe in. C.S. Lewis put it this way: "You never know how much you really believe something until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you." For the disciples, this was a matter of life and death. They realized they were dead men walking. Judas would turn in Jesus, meaning the authorities were on their way.

Yet it was not the first time a so-called messiah had built a following and these men knew those stories. They knew those messiahs and those who followed them were put to death. So they were understandably struggling. They wondered who they might turn to, since the One they thought would give them all the answers they needed seemed to now be speaking about defeat, not victory.

It's in this context that Jesus wanted them and us to know that in our darkest hours, He still wants us to believe Him. He wants us to still take all we are and all we have and to throw it into His arms. This involves three things.

Believing in Jesus means trusting Him in troubled times.

We know that trouble was the order of the day. These men were truly struggling. That's why Jesus began with the simple phrase in John 14:1, "*Let not your hearts be troubled.*" The word troubled means to be agitated, tossed about or shaken.

You might picture what it would be like to be shoved into your own washer and go through a cycle. Then after that, throw yourself into your dryer. That's what their hearts felt like. It was as if they were agitated, turned upside down and tumbled all over the place. If you've lived for any length of time, you know that there can be days when you feel troubled in this way. But Jesus was commanding them—and He commands us—to not be troubled.

Let's consider a couple things about troubled hearts.

1. Troubled hearts are full of fear.

These disciples were afraid. What were they anxious about? They were worried about what they thought their future would be. It wasn't something that was actual, but only potential. That's important. They're thinking about the what-ifs. How many of us do this? These men were thinking of the possibility that the Pharisees and other authorities would not only take Jesus to be put to death, but take them as well. They thought their lives were hanging in the balance.

When people are in this place of fear, two responses are possible.

- First, they may choose flight. Many of us, when we get in a place like these disciples were in, decide to run. We try to get as far from the problem or threat as we can. In fact, as soon as Jesus was arrested, that's what the disciples did. The Bible says they scattered. Perhaps some of you are running today as well. I'm not like that and some of you are not as well.
- Secondly, instead of flight, we're all about fight. It's not necessarily a better response, just a different one. All of us are afraid; some of us face our fears head on, others react to their fears "back on." Before Peter left Jesus, he reacted by drawing out his sword. Like your pastor, Peter wasn't very good at fighting, so all he did was cut off a man's ear.

Jesus would tell us that neither flight nor fight are the right answers. After Jesus healed the man's ear, Peter decided to run off.

2. Troubled hearts erode faith.

Some of you are fighting your fears the wrong way. When we choose either fighting or fleeing, it's a sign that our faith has eroded.

Now, we don't hear much about the disciples for the next several chapters. Rather, it was the women who were involved rather than the men.

If you're living in a place where you're consumed with fear, there's a good chance you're not living in your best faith days. Fear has a way of eroding our confidence in the Lord. The reason we should not let our hearts be troubled is seen in the second half of verse one: *"Believe in God; believe also in me."*

Let's think about this. These men were followers of Jesus, but they were facing an impossible situation. Their lives were hanging in the balance. What should they do? Jesus said, "I want you to believe. Put your trust in Me." Two things come to mind regarding this.

First, anxiety is an unfruitful use of time. Most of our worries are similar to the disciples who were worried about what might soon happen to them. As we know, the things the disciples were worried about never actually came about. They thought they were soon going to die, but none of them lost their lives at that time. John, who wrote this verse, actually lived nearly 60 years longer and he had a fruitful ministry.

Even though much of what we worry about never actually happens, Jesus calls us to believe in Him. When we occupy our time with unfruitful worry, we also end up being unfaithful to our testimony. We claim to follow Christ. We tell people that with God all things are possible. Yet when trials come, we forget these things. We live as if there is no God. Worry means living as if there is no God. Then you would be on your own and have to figure it out by yourself. The disciples were troubled because they had taken Jesus out of the equation. Are we doing that as well?

Jesus continued in verses two and three by saying, *"In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have to you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again."* But their fear kept the disciples from hearing those last words, *"I will come again."*

Faithful hearts focus not on present circumstances, but instead on the promises of God. If you're struggling with fear today, my guess is that your circumstances are the cause. If you want release, then start believing the promises of God. Jesus told these men He would be coming back, but their fear kept them from hearing Him.

I like what Jeremy Taylor says about this: "It's impossible for that man to despair who remembers that his Helper is omnipotent." If the forces of sin, the devil and the world cannot touch our God and He's on our side, then what can men do to us? If we would throw our weight on to this truth, what then should we fear?

By the way, Jesus' words are actually a command: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Instead of worrying, believe in God and believe also in Me." As I said earlier, the word "believe" occurs five times in these 14 verses. However, there is another word that's used twice as often—the word "Father" which is Jesus' favorite word when He refers to God. We also see God spoken of in the Old Testament as being the Father of Israel. Jesus wanted us to see God as personal and caring, as working on our behalf. We can miss this because we forget why Jesus came. Jesus' purpose was not to draw attention to Himself, but rather that they could see the invisible God in Him. Therefore, Jesus was calling their attention to the reality that the Father has a house. The Creator God Who reigns over all has a place to which He invites us.

In Luke 14, Jesus told a story about a master who was the most powerful and rich man in the land. He decided to invite everyone to a party at his house, but none of those who were invited decided to come. He was saddened by that because he had prepared

a big banquet and sent out invitations, but no one came. Instead of closing the door, throwing away the food and deciding never to do this again, the master sent his servant out into the world. He went to the highways and byways, inviting people to come to the master's banquet.

God created the heavens and the earth as His house and He put us here on earth. He welcomed us to the table. But the first things humans chose was not to accept that offer. Ever since then, we have been saying, "No, we have more important things to do." God could have said to us like He did to his angels, "You're one and done. If you rebel against Me, it's over. Off to hell you go" (Jude 6).

Out of compassion, the Master of the house—God the Father—sent His servant Jesus, the Son. He came into the world and became like us, telling us, "Your Father in heaven has invited you to a table and I know the way." Our Big Brother Jesus not only points the way, but He takes care of everything we need in order to enter our Father's house in heaven. How does He do this? Look at verse six.

Believing in Jesus means turning to Him as the way, the truth and the life.

The disciples were saying, "We want to go to the party, but we don't have GPS yet. We don't have phones yet." So Thomas says, *"We do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"* Jesus responds by saying, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life."*

If we want to go to the Father's party, if we want to live in the Father's house, it means turning to Jesus as the only way, as the only truth, as the only life. What does that mean? It means that Jesus' entire purpose for being here on earth is to point people to the Father, to get people into a right relationship with the Father. We cannot find this on our own. Sin blinds us and we've been held captive by the evil one. We are ignorant of the way to find the Father. Jesus came to tell us, "I am the way to find God."

Before we start thinking Jesus is something less than the Father we're trying to reach, Jesus clearly begins His statement with "I am" which is the most intense way someone refers to themselves. We might say it's bombastic. When an athlete, politician or Hollywood star says this, we recoil. "Who do they think they are?" But Jesus was saying, "Only I am." Theologically, this would be blasphemy if it were not true. That's because "I am" is the way God revealed Himself to Moses in the wilderness (Exodus 3:14). Jesus was saying, "Just as God the Father was the 'I am,' so I am." He actually said this seven times in the New Testament: "I am the way, the truth and the life." He also said, "I am the door. I am the shepherd. I am the vine." He makes seven "I am" statements, declaring His equality with God the Father. He's not just a servant; He is God as well.

So Jesus, Who put on flesh and made His dwelling among us, the second person of the Trinity, said, "I am the way that you get to God in heaven." When He said He was the way, that meant any other path or other person was not the way. Yes, that's an exclusive claim.

Now, we live in a world of rainbows and butterflies, thinking, "What I believe is right. What you believe is right." But that is logically inconsistent. We cannot all be right. Not only does Jesus say He is the way, He also claims to be the truth. You will stay dead in your sin and live a life separated from God for all eternity if you don't get Jesus right. You can have all the opinions you want, but they will fall by the wayside on the day you stand before Jesus. In fact, because of His presence, you will bow your knee before Him and your tongue will confess that He is God. So if you're trying to reach God any other way, it won't work. Jesus is the only way to God.

Finally, Jesus told them, "I am the life." Basically this means that apart from Him, we won't have life both in the here and now, nor in the life to come. Jesus told them at one point, "Apart from Me, you can do nothing."

So I use Bret Michaels as a cautionary tale. I don't use him to mock him. My heart breaks for him. Instead of following Christ, instead of seeing Christ as the way, the truth and the life, he continues to do what so many do—in fact, what some of you here today do. He tries to figure it out on his own. But apart from Jesus, Bret, you and the rest of the world will never be able to find God.

That's why Jesus, in His great love for us, put on flesh, lived life as a human, died a sinner's death that He did not deserve, all so He could take upon Himself the weight of my sin and yours. So now by turning to Him, trusting in Him and putting all our sin on

Him, we will experience the only path to heaven, the only true measure of righteousness, the only source of physical and spiritual life. Jesus said, "I'm it."

I like what Thomas á Kempis said: "Without the way, there is no going. Without the truth, there is no knowing. Without the life, there is no living." Is that true for you? Do you know the way? Do you know the truth? Do you know the life? If you do, it will set you free.

You see, this is the most important decision you will ever make. It is not who you will marry, what job you'll take or what you'll do with your life. The biggest, most important decision you will ever make is what will you do with Jesus? Jesus is saying right now, "I'm it. You can choose to rebel against Me and keep living your own way, or you can take all of who you are and throw yourself on Me."

If you do that, Jesus says, "I'll take what you give Me and will make you new. I'll save you from your sins. I'll give you purpose and meaning. I will give you, not something, but Someone to believe in." If you've never done this, today is the day. Don't wait any longer. Don't let fear or circumstances keep you from believing and trusting in Jesus.

Believing in Jesus means taking Him to the world.

Now, the rest of the passage is for those who have believed. In verses 12-14, Jesus says:

¹² "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

Right away you might be thinking, "Yes. He's like a genie in the bottle. I like Jesus. I'm going to be able to do what He does." But what does that mean? It means we've got an opportunity to take Jesus to the world. Just as Jesus came to reveal to the world the Father in heaven, now, because of Christ, we are His ambassadors to take the path to God to the world. As you go into your workplaces, schools and communities, your whole purpose for being is to follow Jesus and live for Jesus, not only for yourself, but so all the world may know the God Who sent Jesus. You can start inviting people to the banquet our God in heaven is preparing.

Jesus said, "Not only are you going to do the works I've done, which is pretty amazing, but you're going to do even greater things." Does that mean we'll do more spectacular miracles than Jesus did? Not really. I don't believe God has it in His plans for me to raise the dead. I wish I could. But God has given me a role to share the good news of Jesus with anyone who will hear it. I am to tell them Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.

So what does it mean to be greater? You and I, as followers of Jesus Christ, have a greater ministry than He did in three ways:

1. Geographically. Jesus ministered in Palestine; we are ministering to the whole world.
2. Numerically. Let's count up all the followers Jesus had in His three and a half years of ministry. We might get to a multitude of 10,000 or 15,000 people. The Bible tells us that 3,000 were added on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41). It took Jesus three and a half years to maybe get to 10,000, but His disciples in one day added 3,000. Now we know the souls that have given themselves to Jesus Christ, just like we cannot number the sands on the seashore. So we're seeing a numerical work that is even greater than in Jesus' day.
3. Ethnically. Jesus' ministry was primarily to Jewish people, plus a smattering of Samaritans and a handful of Greeks along the way. That's the totality of ethnic ministry Jesus had. We live in an age when we're seeing every tribe, tongue and nation bowing the knee to Jesus.

So was Jesus right about greater works? Yes, He was. But here's the amazing thing. For those who feel overwhelmed by the call to take Jesus to the world, He tells us, "Whatever you need to accomplish that work—whatever it takes for you to glorify God in your workplace, school, home or neighborhood—just ask and I'll give it to you." That person you've been wanting to reach, but you're not sure how, God says, "Just ask and I'll give you what you need." If you want to make an impact in your community, but you don't know how to, God says, "Pray and I'll give you what you need." So we have all we need, if we would just believe.