

To hold on to Jesus you must hold on to his Word.

Text John 14:23-29 for 5/26/2019 by Pastor Bolwerk

²³Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will hold on to my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴The one who does not love me does not hold on to my words. The word that you are hearing is not mine, but it is from the Father who sent me. ²⁵"I have told you these things while staying with you. ²⁶But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I told you. ²⁷"Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, and do not let it be afraid. ²⁸You heard me tell you, 'I am going away and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. ²⁹"I have told you now before it happens so that, when it does happen, you may believe."

Theme: To hold on to Jesus you must hold on to his Word.

Do you love Jesus? Jesus starts out this section of scripture by saying, **"If anyone loves me, he will hold on to my word"** (v. 23). When Jesus says "my word" he uses the Greek word "logos." This is the same word that John used in the very first verse of his gospel when he said, "In the beginning was the Word [logos]" (John 1:1). The Gospel writer John uses that word "logos" to describe Jesus, to tell us who Jesus is and what he does. When Jesus says, "hold on to my word" it is as if Jesus is saying, "If you love me then hold on to me." To hold on to Jesus you must hold on to his Word.

How do you know if the word of Jesus you have is really his word or someone else's word? If you took a sample of teachings from various Christian churches in the world you would find three different beliefs on Holy Communion, various views on baptism, a myriad of teachings on heaven and hell, and dozens of other teachings that often don't seem to have anything to do with God. So how do you know which words are really God's words?

If you want to know that the Jesus you have is God's promised Savior; if you want to be sure that the Jesus you trust in is the Son of God who lived and died and rose again to pay for the sins of this world, then you need to be absolutely certain that the words you know and trust are really Jesus' words. Jesus is intimately connected to his word. Knowing that, how much of Jesus' word can you take away before you no longer have Jesus?

How can you be certain the words you hear and read are really Christ's? The first thing you need to know when it comes to holding on to Jesus' words is that not everyone who preaches about Jesus is a true disciple of Jesus. You need to be able to identify those who are telling you the truth about Jesus. Here's how you do that. Jesus said, **"If anyone loves me, he will hold on to my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. The one who does not love me does not hold on to my words. The word that you are hearing is not mine, but it is from the Father who sent me"** (vs. 23-24). Christ's words are God's words. And all who love Jesus will hold on to his word, that is, they will keep God's words, live his words, and obey his word. Those who do not love Jesus will not hold on to his words. Their lives and their teachings will not line up with what God says. This means we need to know God's word. We need also need to carefully listen to, and observe, those who claim to speak or teach God's word.

Why did Little Red Riding Hood want to avoid the wolf? The wolf wanted to devour her. How did the wolf try to trick her into trusting him? He dressed up like her sweet, caring, innocent grandma. So when Little Red Riding Hood saw what looked like her grandma, she didn't fear that which was really deadly to her.

Jesus tells his disciples to listen to those who hold on to his Word, and to avoid those who do not. The devil knows how important this is. He knows that if he can get you to believe

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something about Jesus that isn't true, something completely contrary to what Jesus taught, then it won't matter how often you say the name Jesus, or how long you pray to Jesus, or how much you talk about Jesus. If you don't really believe the truth about Jesus, then you are not really believing in Jesus.

The devil also knows: no Christian in their right mind would ever get anywhere near someone who's telling lies about Christ or changing what he says. This is why Satan takes the ferocious wolves of his deadly lies and dresses them up so you can't recognize them. He covers his lies with the suits of good-looking preachers. He hides his lies in churches that are full and vibrant. How many preachers look inviting? How many churches look as if they are full of the Holy Spirit and exciting? Many of them. And what makes this difficult is that there's nothing wrong with nice suits or lively worship or large churches. But you need to evaluate your preachers and your churches exactly how Jesus tells you to. And according to Jesus, the number one requirement is that they teach *his* truth.

Evaluating preachers and churches is much more difficult to do than you think. Would you like to see how difficult this is? Maybe you're thinking "Not really." You've heard this all before, right? Watch out for false prophets. They come to you like wolves in sheep's clothing. Be on your guard against them. Blah, blah, blah.

I would like you to listen to the following statements from Joyce Meyer, the leader of a major Christian Church here in the United States. This is from the church's website in the section about what they teach.

God loves you, and He proved His unconditional love when He sent His *only Son* to die for you. Today, God is calling you to come to Him...to believe in Jesus and accept Him as your Savior. And when you give your heart to Him, He will give you a new life that brings real love, lasting peace, abundant joy, and so much more.

(From: <https://joycemeyer.org/everydayanswers/ea-teachings/get-to-know-jesus>)

That sounds good, doesn't it? It sounds like what we teach. It speaks of God's unconditional love, God sending his only Son to die for you, believing in Jesus as Savior which gives you a new life, peace, joy. These are words that we use. But did you catch the false words, the words that turn it all into a lie? The words "accept," and "give your heart." God's word is clear, we came into this world DEAD in our transgressions and sins (Ephesians 2:1, Psalm 51:5). Something that is dead cannot accept or give. Yet, perhaps we are just misunderstanding this person. Here is something else Mrs. Meyer teaches.

I am so grateful for my relationship with the Holy Spirit. I also greatly enjoy teaching others about the important role He plays in everything we do. [...] Simply put, to be led by the Holy Spirit means to develop a sensitivity and obedience to His voice as He leads and guides us through life. Now, I'm not talking about an audible voice, although God can speak to us in that way. Rather, the voice of the Holy Spirit is a "knowing" deep down inside of us. Maybe you're praying about which job to take, what school to send your child, or where to live. As you take time to seek God and listen, He will often guide you through this knowing deep inside—His Spirit giving you the direction you need.

(From: <https://joycemeyer.org/everydayanswers/ea-teachings/god-is-calling-for-you>)

Again, that sounds good. We speak of some of these same things in our church, don't we? Being filled with the Holy Spirit, being led by the Spirit of God, in faith seeking God and getting direction from his Spirit. So what is the problem with these statements? What's missing? The one things Jesus says we should hold on to: Jesus words. Joyce Meyer never mentions that we

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come to faith only through God's word (Romans 10:17). She never mentions that the speaking of the Holy Spirit is done through the Word of God, that is the words of the Bible. She points to a "knowing" deep inside, as if there were some special knowledge that the Spirit stirs up inside a person. That teaching is not scriptural, it's psychobabble. It is pointing a person away from Jesus' words.

And it is not just Joyce Meyer who does this. There are teachers in every major Christian denomination today who do this. That includes: Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Assembly of God, Church of God, Pentecostal, and yes, even Lutheran! But being Catholic, Baptist, Lutheran, or anything else does not save you. It is only the that truth saves you. And your responsibility when you walk into any church or listen to any preacher is to judge: You are to take what that church or preacher is teaches and compare it to what God says. And then you need to stick with the people who give you the truth and stay away from those who don't. The eternal salvation of your soul is at stake. That means you need to do this with me too. Jesus expects you to do this. And you can, because he gave you everything you need to be able to do this.

Jesus said, "I have told you these things while staying with you" (v. 25). In other words, every truth you need to know Christ has already said. Every truth you need for eternal life, Jesus spoke while he was on earth. It's already out there. Jesus tells you not to expect any new revelations. He's already revealed everything that needs revealing. So, open your Bible and let him speak to you. Let Jesus tell you the truth so you can better evaluate what people try to pass off as the truth.

But, what if the bible's wrong? What if it changed over time? People make mistakes. Memories fail. Our memories can even trick us into remembering something different from how it actually happened. And just think about this: none of the books of the New Testament were written for at least five years after Jesus ascended into heaven. Five years! I don't know about you, but I have trouble remembering what my wife said five minutes ago. These men were human too. Do we really want to base our hope for all eternity on the memories of ordinary people like us? You shouldn't. But it wasn't their memories that were responsible for getting the truth recorded. It was God's.

Jesus promise his disciples this: "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I told you" (v. 26). You're not trusting the memory of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. You're not basing your eternal life on the opinions of Peter and Paul. What you have in the Bible is none other than the pure, unadulterated, Word of the Almighty God, placed in the hearts and minds of these men by God's own Holy Spirit, then written down for you to read. Jesus, who is true God, is also that word made flesh. To hold on to Jesus you must hold on to his Word. He wants you to hold on to that word because he wants to leave you with peace.

Christ said, "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, and do not let it be afraid" (v. 27). It's a good thing Jesus doesn't give as the world gives. The world has never been good at giving peace. The world has tried and failed to give us peace within our families, our neighborhoods, our nations. And the reason they've failed is because they're relying on sinful human beings like you and me to make that peace happen. The world believes that we are the only solution to peace. Not surprisingly, you will find churches, and preachers telling you the same thing about peace with God. They say you have to make it happen. You have to do more good than bad. You have to pay back God with your life. But that's a recipe for total failure. Your sinfully messed up life isn't worth garbage to God. He doesn't want your lies, your hate, your greed, your arrogance, your complaining. Besides, there is no better way to create doubt. Do you really want to trust yourself

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to make things right with God? How many good things do you have to do to outweigh the bad? How many sins can you commit before God says “enough”? You’ll never know because he never tells you. And because you’ll never know, you’ll always have doubt. You’ll always fear.

But Jesus tells you not to fear because he doesn’t give as the world gives. He gives as God gives. And what God gives is peace because what Jesus gave was his life, the only life whose blood completely cleanses, perfectly purifies, and forever forgives. Jesus alone is your solution to sin. Trusting in him for forgiveness your life is clean, your sins are forgiven, and a perfect God sees you as fit for his heaven. If God decrees it, it must be done. And in the Bible, God decrees it. It will be done. God gives you his word because through that word he give you the power to trust his Word, to trust his promises, to trust his love.

Jesus wants you to trust him when he says, “**I am going away and I am coming to you**” (v. 28). He wants you to be ready when he comes. Jesus wants to find you full of faith when he returns, and that can only happen when you hang on to his Word. Hold on to his truth. Hold on to Jesus, because he will soon be coming. He will come to take you to that place in heaven which he said he was going to prepare just for you. Amen.