

THE CLOSENESS OF A DISCIPLE

(Closing The Gap Between God And Ourselves)
John 13:23



4 WORDS OF POWER

- ◆ John Is Leaning
- ◆ John Is Standing
- ◆ John Is Running
- ◆ John Is Following

“Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you” (James 4:8A)

Bill Kirk

“THE CLOSENESS OF A DISCIPLE”

Text: James 4:8A; John 13:23

Subject: “Closing The Gap Between God And Ourselves”

Introduction

(It is no secret to anyone today):

- ◆ That you can be married on paper, but not be close in heart to your spouse.
- ◆ That you can be on a team playing baseball, but not be close to those on the baseball team.
- ◆ That you can be saved and born again of the Spirit of God, but not be close in fellowship with the Lord.

Question: What is our subject today?

Answer: Closing the gap between the heart of God and your heart today.

Fact: There is a great contrast in your Bible,

Fact: It is a contrast between two of Jesus’ disciples, Peter and John.

Fact: It is a contrast that provokes us to action and goes deep within our spirit.

Fact: It is a documented contrast that produces action in every would be healthy disciple.

First There Is Peter

- ◆ In Luke 22:54 we read, “And Peter followed afar off”
- ◆ In Matthew 26:69, “Peter sits outside of the palace hall in the basement”
- ◆ In Matthew 26:71, “Peter lingers out on the porch and says, “I don’t know this Jesus you’ve arrested”
- ◆ In Mark 14:54, “Peter follows at a distance and warms himself by the fire”

Question: “Pastor, what are the consequences when there is distance between me and Jesus?”

Answer: 1. Peter yields to temptation.

2. Peter weeps tears of regret.

3. Peter has a great loss of joy.

4. Peter becomes impatient, impulsive and imprudent (as he cuts off the servants ear – that Jesus restores to health).

Question: “Pastor, what are the consequences when there is no distance between me and Jesus?”

Question: “Pastor, how does John the beloved speak to me personally today?”

Question: “Pastor, how does the Lord use Peter’s friend, John to minister to my heart?”

Question: “Pastor, how can I live with no distance between me and God?”

“The Closeness Of A Disciple”

Or

“Words Of Power That Move Me Closer”

I. We See John “Leaning” (In John 13: 23)

“Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved”

Question: What was John doing?

Answer: He was leaning on the breast of Jesus.

Question: Why was John leaning on the breast of Jesus?

Answer: Because he desired to be as close to Jesus as he could.

Word #1 Is “Desire”

- ◆ In John 13, the disciples are troubled.
- ◆ Jesus has just said in V. 21, “One of you shall betray Me”.

- ◆ The disciples then begin to question themselves: “Is it me?” “Is it you?” “Who is it?”
- ◆ There is bewilderment over who it is that will fall into temptation. (v. 22)
- ◆ And in the midst of the traitor being exposed (which was Judas – v. 26) (We read in v. 23)

“Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples whom Jesus loved”

- ◆ He is the youngest disciple.
- ◆ He is a teenager when Jesus calls him.
- ◆ He is sitting next to Jesus (on His right) at the table.
- ◆ He is the one who asks Jesus, “Lord, who is it?”

Question: Why is John leaning on Jesus?

Answer: Because he has a desire to be closer.

Question: Why is V. 23 in your Bible?

Answer: To reveal the affection that the Lord wants to have with us.

- ◆ To tell us that the Lord can close the gap.
- ◆ To show us that the Lord is full of mercy.
- ◆ To invite us to do what Judas didn’t do.

Fact: Judas gives up the Lord (for 30 pieces of silver).

Fact: John gives up the silver (for a closer walk with Jesus).

Question: On a scale of 1-10, what is my desire to be closer to Jesus?

#1 – John Leaning Speaks Of Desire!

II. We See John “Standing” (In John 19:26)

“When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved (John) He saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!”

Question: Pastor, what does John standing by the cross have to do with me?

Answer: It reveals the second word that keeps us close to Jesus:

- ◆ In v. 17, Jesus willingly carries His cross.
- ◆ In v. 18, Jesus is crucified between two thieves.
- ◆ In v. 19, Pilate puts a title on the cross (the title, “King of the Jews” symbolized the rightful place of Jesus to rule as King over all).
- ◆ In v. 23, The soldiers gamble for Jesus’ clothes.
- ◆ In v. 26, A scene that speaks to us all:

#1. There are women and John standing at the cross (and)

#2. Jesus acknowledges them both.

Question: What is the big deal about standing at the cross where Jesus is dying?

Answer: The big deal is, there was great risk involved:

- #1. Jesus was a revolutionary in the eyes of Rome (and)
- #2. Jesus was a heretic in the eyes of the religious leaders.

Thus:

- ◆ Any supporters of Jesus ran the risk of ridicule, arrest and execution.

Question: But what disciple is close to Jesus?

Answer: John the beloved!

Question: Why is John standing here?

Answer: One word “**Devotion**”

Question: Why isn't there a gap between John and Jesus?

Answer: Because John is willing to give up anything (even his life) to be close to Jesus.

What A Discovery Here

- ◆ That devotion isn't measured by my attendance or offering,
- ◆ Devotion isn't measured by my song or silence,
- ◆ Devotion isn't measured by my volume or motion, (But)
- ◆ Devotion is measured by its cost!

(In Other Words)

- ◆ Like John, am I willing to stand at the cross of Jesus?
- ◆ Am I willing to stand and risk disapproval from those who know me?
- ◆ Am I willing to express my devotion even if it cost me something?
- ◆ It is going to cost me something to be close to Jesus!

#1. John leaning speaks of "**Desire**"

#2. John standing speaks of "**Devotion**"

III. We See John "Running" (In John 20:4)

"So they ran both together, and the other disciple (John) did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulcher (the tomb)"

Question: Why is John running a race with Peter to the empty tomb?

Answer: Because of what John just heard:

- ◆ In v. 1, Mary visited the tomb when it was still dark and saw the stone rolled away.
- ◆ In v. 2, Mary runs to Peter and John to tell them what she saw.
- ◆ In vs. 3 & 4, Peter and John race on foot to get there first.
- ◆ In v. 4, we read, "John did outrun Peter".

Question: Why is John running?

Answer: Word #3 – "**Determination**"

- ◆ John wants to see it for himself!
- ◆ John doesn't want to depend on Mary's words!
- ◆ John is not going to let Peter bring him a report second hand.

(In Other Words)

- ◆ John is determined to experience spiritual reality for himself.
- ◆ John heard of Mary's experience, but John wants to know it first-hand.

Question: Does John go 95 yards down field?

Answer: No, (v. 8) – "John goes in the tomb, sees and believes"

#1. He hears Mary

#3. He goes inside the tomb

#2. He runs with Peter

#4. He sees and believes

Question: What does John's "running determination" have to do with me?

Answer: It leads me closer to Jesus.

(How?)

#1. Mary's witness is not good enough!

#2. Peter's witness is not good enough!

#3. I must understand (and determine) that I too am invited to discover a living Jesus.

- ◆ I must “get up” like John did
- ◆ I must “go forth” like John did
- ◆ I must “go in” for myself

(In Other Words)

- ◆ Thank God for Mary and Peter, but God wants **You** to experience the power of the resurrection in your own personal life (no need to be an onlooker only).

IV. We see John “Following” (In John 21:20)

“Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; (John) which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?”

Question: What are the last two words of Jesus in v. 19?

Answer: “Follow Me”

Question: What does Peter see in (v. 20)?

Answer: John “following” Jesus!

Question: What does it mean here to follow Jesus?

Answer: In (v. 21) Peter asks Jesus about what John is doing.

- ◆ In (v. 22), Jesus rebukes Peter and says, “Hey Peter, John isn’t your concern, you just be sure to follow Me”.

Question: So what does it mean to follow Jesus here in verses 19 and 22?

- ◆ It means to serve God where God puts you and leave everyone else to serve where God puts them.
- ◆ It means to concentrate all of your attention on your own dedication.
- ◆ It means to focus all of your energy on completing God’s will in your life.
- ◆ It means don’t covet or copy or conform to someone else – but follow Jesus.

(Word #4 – Is “Decision”)

- ◆ To be close to Jesus, I must “decide” to follow Him.
- ◆ I must decide apart from anyone else.
- ◆ I must chose for myself to live close to Jesus.

Question: What is the reward of closeness to Jesus?

#1. You will experience God’s presence in your life (through closeness in prayer).

#2. You will experience God’s plan for your life (thorough the love of the Scriptures).

#3. You will experience God’s power in your life (through staying filled with the Holy Spirit).

#4. You will experience God’s purpose for your life (through obedience to the known will of God).

Altar Call

Question: Are you close to the Lord in prayer?

Question: Are you close to the Lord in the Word?

Question: Are you close to the Lord full of the Spirit?

Question: Are you close to the Lord in obedience to what God is telling you to do?

AMEN!

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