



TIME OF GRACE®

Jesus #nofilter: Jesus Is the ONLY Way to Heaven Study Notes

Summary

When Jesus says he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, what is he saying to us? Pastor Mike helps us answer that question by first looking at what Jesus tells us to do when our hearts are troubled. Pastor Mike continues this series that looks at the offensive, unfiltered, hard teachings of Jesus.

- 5F Problems? = _____, _____, _____, _____, _____
- John 14:1 — Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me.
- John 14:2-4 — My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3 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. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going.
- John 14:5-6 — Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" 6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.
- Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωὴ
I am _____way and _____truth and _____life.
- Jesus' Solution = _____

Points to Ponder

1. Study the rest of Jesus' conversation by reading John 14:1-14. What additional things do you learn in verses 7-14?
2. Few Sundays are better than Easter to invite a friend to worship. Reach out to someone A.S.A.P. to connect them to the God that we worship.

Homework for Next Week

Read John 11:1-44

Time of Grace Ministry
Jesus is the ONLY Way to Heaven
John 14
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Pastor Mike Novotny

What do you do when you have problems in one of those five key areas of your life? I've been alive for 42 and a quarter years. I've been a pastor for almost 16 years, and I've realized that what people like me and people like you care about more than anything else in the world are the five key areas, essential areas of our life. And the question I want you to wrestle with today is what do you do -- because we all do something. What do you do when something goes wrong in one or more of those five key areas? As you think about that question, I should probably clarify what the five key areas are. Grab a pen. Write these down.

I've noticed that the key things we care about most in life all start with the same letter, the letter F. The first one that I can guarantee that you care about is family. All of us deep down, as complicated as our family might be, long for a family that is close. Right? We want to have a tight relationship with our mom, our dad, our brothers, our sisters. If you have children, your son, your daughter. If you're dating or married to someone, your husband, or your wife. But I don't have to tell you that family is complicated and sometimes you want to be close to your mom, but I don't know, you and your mom just butt heads all the time, and you'd love to be the guy who can call up his dad and get the wisdom from his experience, but your dad's, I don't know, been emotionally distant or physically distant.

What do you do when your family is flawed? Or dating -- someone sent me an Instagram message this week, "Pastor Mike, is Christian dating supposed to be this hard?" Right? Because even if you're a Christian, you don't always know if it's compatible or don't want to be serious about this relationship. Or, "we've been together for a long time, but it doesn't feel like it's getting better. Do we want to commit until death do us part?" That's incredibly complicated. So, you go online, and you try to date, right? But that's super, super overwhelming. And guys -- no offense, but guys can be really weird. And women -- I'm not going to finish that sentence. You can finish it. I'm not that dumb. Right?

I mean, people are people. And I don't know, sometimes we look good on the screen but in real life, it's more complicated than that. So, what do you do when your relationship status is messy and complicated? Or you want a kid, but you can't have one? Or you have a kid, but that kid is making some really bad decisions? Sooner or later you're going to have family problems. So, my question to you is not what are your problems, or if you have them, but what do you do when you have them? How do you cope? How do you deal?

Or maybe your problems aren't family problems but they're category number two. They're friend problems. Just like a good family, all of us ache for close friendships, but finding a good friend and keeping a good friend might seem simple on paper, but have you noticed in life it's not like that at all? Whether you're six years old and you're brand-new at your school or you're 16 trying to survive middle and high school life, or you're a grown up. I think of guys I've talked to from our church, they have drinking buddies and they have old friends that they see on Facebook, but real friends that you can talk about real life with, that is way more uncommon than people might guess. So, when you are struggling to find a friend, when you're sitting at the lunch table and things are tense, when you know you need help, but you don't know who you can get help from, what do you do?

Or problem number three, fitness problems. Probably not the way we'd say it. We'd say physical health. And physical sounds like an F. That's going to be a PH, just in case you need to know, but you know what I mean, right? I was reading your prayer requests just a couple Sundays ago, and just this long list of all the physical things that are weighing you down. There's the injury. There's the disability. There's the surgery. There's the recovery. Someone's praying for cancer of the lungs, another cancer of the liver, another cancer of the blood. "My dad has dementia. My sister was intubated. There's an infection." Your friend group might be great but when you look in the mirror and you see a body that's breaking down or you're going to the hospital to visit someone you love, what do you say to yourself in those moments? How do you -- how do you get through them?

Or maybe it's not something physical, maybe it's something financial. Anyone here broke? Yeah, lots of us are. Some of us, you know, check our banking app everyday just to make sure we got enough money to pay this bill or that one. We have to pick and choose because we don't have enough to cover it all. Some of us have lost jobs recently. Some of us are struggling in our careers. Some of us don't even want to check the banking app because we know what the answer is going to be.

And some of you, it looks like you have a lot but with the big house and the nice car comes some pretty big bills that burden you and keep you up at night. When you feel financial stress and you're not sure if you're going to be able to make ends meet, what do you -- what do you think about?

Or fifth, finally, as long as we're in church, some of us have faith problems. Right? You ever been in a group of Christians and you just kind of looked around and felt like you were a little bit behind? These people, they know more about the Bible, their relationships seem better. Here, I am struggling not to drink, not to get high, not to go back to old ways, not to lose my cool, not to, you know, snap or whatever. And here these people seem like nice Christian families.

It might be one of those things, or two of those things, or all of those things. Today -- I don't want you to make a confession about what your problems are. I want to force you to answer this question, what do you do when you have those problems? What's

your default reaction when something goes wrong in an area of life that matters so much?

I might not know you, but I do know this, you do something. Right? You have some way of dealing with it. For some people it's escapism, self-medication. "You know, if I just don't think about it, it's not real. If I drink enough, I'll forget, at least for tonight. If I'm anxious about it, I'll smoke a joint with my friend. So, I'll shop. I'll grab my phone and scroll, get lost in video games." Just ignore it. That's what some of you do.

And some of you, on the other hand, you double down and try to fix it. Or you stay up at night thinking, worrying, fretting, figuring out what you're going to say, and what you're going to do. How you're going to handle the situation. You work twice as hard to fix the issue. If I give you a second to think, could you come up with your default reaction?

Because today, Jesus wants to give you another option. We've been journeying through the gospel of John and we're going to get to the point where Jesus tells us exactly what to do when our hearts are troubled. When we're worried and anxious and afraid about something that's going totally wrong. And Jesus has every right to speak about this because His friends were freaking out on that Thursday night.

Hey, you know the story of what we call Holy Week? Jesus is going to die on a cross on Friday, but the night before, on Thursday, he's gathered with His friends. He has this huge sermon where he's trying to teach them as much as he can. And in that sermon, he says, "You know, some of you are going to abandon me. One of you is going to deny me. One of you is going to betray me. The world is not going to love you. I'm about to leave you."

And the disciples, their hearts, if you could picture them, are just swirling, moving a hundred miles an hour. They were anxious. They were afraid. They were panicked. Their eyes were this wide. And that's when Jesus told them exactly what to do. And today, Jesus is going to tell you too.

In John 14, in just six verses Jesus is going to tell us exactly how to deal with the problems that we face in this life. So, let's grab our Bibles and look at what Jesus said. John 14, let me read to you just verse 1. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me." At first, that seems like really shallow advice, doesn't it? "Don't." You imagine going to counseling if you're struggling with anxiety and the counselor just says, "Well, stop." Thanks. How am I paying you? Right? I mean, he just says, "Don't let your heart -- I know your hearts are troubled. Don't. Stop it. No more."

Which seems insensitive until Jesus says something that might be easy to read by but don't. He says, "Do not let your heart be troubled. Period. You believe in God." Well, obviously, these are very religious Jewish men. Why did Jesus say that? It is so easy when you're face to face with something troublesome to forget completely, "Oh, yeah. I'm not an atheist. I believe in God. I believe that God exists. I believe that

God knows all things. I believe that God holds the situation in the palm of his hands. I believe that God has compassion for me. I believe that God is using all things for -- there's all these things we talk about all the time about God, but when trouble hits it's so easy to forget. "Oh, yeah. I'm not an atheist. I believe in the most powerful, beautiful, compassionate, forgiving person who exists in the whole universe."

That's Jesus' really simple but powerful answer. Don't be troubled. Remember that you believe in God. I might picture it this way. Imagine that this is the thing that's stressing you out right now. Yeah, you didn't choose it but here it is, and you spend most of your days thinking about this and worrying about this and focused on this. What Jesus is saying to his friends is, "You believe in God." In the original Greek of the New Testament, it literally says, "You believe towards God." It's a directional word. Like, you've been focused, your direction, your heart, your attention is this, the problem, the thing you want to fix. The thing that you can't fix. Don't forget to believe towards God, to turn to his direction. Right?

The way the human head is built. I can't, look at this and that at the same time. I have to choose one or the other. And Jesus is saying, "You've been choosing to focus on this. No wonder you're freaking out." Hey, don't forget, believe in God, towards God. Pay attention in his direction. You might be surprised the kind of things that happen in your heart. In fact, what Jesus says next is one of the most important things to remember about God when you're facing some problems and freaking out.

Let's read down with Jesus. Verse 2, He says, "My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I'm 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." Jesus says, "Don't let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, the Father. He has a house." And get this, "My Father's house has many rooms." There's a lot of room for people like us in the Father's house.

Can you imagine if Jesus said, "In the Father's house, there are three open rooms." Peter, James, John and Thomas would look at each other, "Well, at least I'm not as bad as him." No, Jesus is saying, "The vacancy sign is on in heaven. There's room there for a person like you." Because if Jesus would say this, "I'm going there to prepare a place for you." If he could promise a room in the father's house to guys like that who would deny him, and abandon him, and sin against him, that is really powerful proof that maybe, just maybe, there's room for a person like you. Yeah, some of you, I have a hunch here today, think that maybe you're not good enough for heaven. Maybe you've made some decisions that make you unworthy of heaven. You're aware enough to realize that if God is good and you've done things that are bad, that's a problem with getting to heaven. I'll tell you this, you're exactly right. If God just looked at me, he looked at you and He knew everything and saw everything, well then yes, we would not have a space, a room reserved for us in heaven. It's a holy place, a beautiful place. People that say unbeautiful and ugly things would not fit there.

But notice the subjects of Jesus's verbs. He said, "I am going there. I am preparing a place. I will come back. I will take you to be with me." Jesus is hinting at what in the Christian faith we call the gospel. That getting to heaven is not like you be a really good person or you fix your mistakes. Instead, it's all about Jesus. It's about a Jesus who cleanses us, who washes us of sins, who forgives and saves us.

He doesn't give us a coupon for 20% off of our moral ticket to get into heaven. He just pays the whole thing. He reserves the room. And when you check in at the gates and you say the name of Jesus, the room is ready even for a person like you. Now, some of you, your brain might push back at that. You say, "Pastor, you don't know what I did, man, when I was totally disconnected, when things got emotional, when we were going through the divorce, the things I said, the choices I've made." And I would say, "Yeah, it might be bad but Jesus said that to Peter, a guy who said, 'I don't even know Jesus.' He denied his friendship with him, and yet said, 'Peter, I'm preparing a place for you too.'"

That's why He clarified the way to the Father's house in the last verses from our text for today. "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.'" No one comes to the Father expect through me.

Now, how many of you have heard John 14:6 before? Can I see a show of hands? Yeah, a lot of you. If you don't know and you're new to church, this is maybe one of the top five things that Jesus ever said. John 14:6, one of the most highlighted verses in the Bible app. But the more you think about the words you realized, wow, this is an incredibly offensive and an incredibly amazing thing for Jesus to say. Do you see why?

The offense makes me think of a woman name Robyn. About a decade ago, I think it was 2013, I was on a bus in Chicago at the airport about to fly over to Greece. I'm sitting in a seat with my pastor friend and who's sitting in front of us, but the biggest extrovert in the history of extroverts. I quickly find out, because she's an extrovert, that her name is Robyn. She quickly finds out that I'm a pastor, that my buddy is a pastor. And she's talking, and talking, and talking, and talking, and talking, and talking, until she says this one line. She says, "Ah, man, don't you think it's great that no matter what a person believes, or what path they follow, or what religion they are, that there's all these different ways to get up to God?"

And my buddy, I think he said it really respectfully. He said, "Well, actually, do you know in the gospel of John, Jesus said, 'I am the way,' not, 'a way,' but, 'the way.'" And I remember what Robyn said back. She smiled and said, "Well, I think all three of us know that in the original Greek of the New Testament Jesus does not say that he was the way, but he just claimed to be a way." To which I thought on the bus, "I wish I'd paid attention in Greek class." I knew the English. I'd memorize that as a kid but wasn't positive what the Greek said.

So, I had to grab my Greek Bible when I got home, and I want to show you what I found. So, this is the Greek of John 14:6. That's what Greek looks like. Really small words. This is really simple. John is a fisherman. When I studied Greek in college, it's the first class we took reading the gospel of John. It's as easy as it gets. Doctor Luke, much harder. Fisherman John, very easy. Let me show you a simple translation. Let me leave out a key word.

So, Jesus was saying I am blank way, and blank truth, and blank life. And what goes in the blanks are those three letters that kind of look like a fancy N. Do you see them? That one letter is also a very, very simple Greek word. You want to guess what it is? The. Alright, it's not mysterious. It's like kindergarten grammar. Jesus did not claim, "I am a way. I am just one of many spiritual options. I am the way." In fact, he doubled down on that when he said, "No one," categorically, "no one gets to the father, gets to heaven, except through me."

And I can understand why Robyn would want to filter Jesus. I'm not sure who you know and who you love, but I know and love people who are not followers of Jesus but are pretty good people. People that bring me joy, people that I love. They're not church people. They're not Christian people. They might not care about religion or maybe they follow another religion. Do you know and love people like that too?

But we can't filter Jesus and say, "Well, it's fine. Maybe he meant something else." No, this is what he said. So, the question that we have to wrestle with is, why would Jesus say that? Why would he make this exclusive claim that, "Unless you believe in me as your God, your Lord, your Savior and your King, there is zero chance that even the best of you can get to heaven?" I'll tell you why.

Because heaven is not just a better place, it is the best place. Because if anyone who is, you know, kind of sort of mostly good could get into heaven, what would happen in heaven for those moments when they're not good? When Jesus left that upper room and went to the cross, what he did was not just give us a noble example of selflessness. What he did was die to make us perfect.

I don't know if you've heard that, but that is what Christians believe. Jesus is not just our example; he is our Savior. He highlighted everything I've ever done wrong, and on the cross, he pushed delete. He took all the moral mistakes you've ever made, and he separated them as far from you as the east is from the west. If you are a believer in Jesus, as much as you struggle, and as much as you've sinned, God can actually look at you and say, "You're actually good enough for this perfect place. I see no flaw in you. I have nothing to blame you for." If Jesus died, not for some of it, but for all of it; then everyone who has Jesus knows the way, can get to the Father and can live and die with the hope that heaven is ours hard stop, no doubt, no question mark, exclamation point, through the mighty name of Jesus. This is what the son of God taught us.

When you are worried, when you are afraid, remember you believe in God. You believe that there is a place where there is no pain. "You believe that you are going

there because I have made you good enough. I am the way, and you will come to the Father through me.”

So, grab a pen. Let’s write down the big idea for today. What’s Jesus’ solution to our five F problems? I’d summarize it this way. Think about G-O-D ASAP As fast as you can get your brain to thinking not about the thing, but about God. So, here’s my homework for you. It’s a simple little Christian exercise. The next time you have a problem. You’re thinking about it. You’re stressing. You’re at your phone. Someone said something nasty. Someone told you some bad news at work. I physically want you to do this with your body. I want you to physically trigger your brain to say, “If I’m a Christian, this isn’t the whole story. In fact, it’s like the six-week part of the story. I’m a person who believes in the God of this book. A God of power and love. A God who saved me from my sin and is going to save me from all of my struggle.” If you want to add a cherry on top, just say, “I’m not an atheist. No, No, No. I’m a child of God, and in my Father’s house, there is room for me.”

That’s what my friend did. Just a few blocks from this church, my friend for a few months was sitting in an orange jumpsuit awaiting his trial. As the date approached, he didn’t know if the judge would say, “You’re free,” and be sitting right back here in church, or if he’d spend maybe the rest of his adult life in prison. Can you imagine, sitting in that cell marking one day closer to the day where your whole life will be decided? He was worried for a while. But then he wrote me a letter and when I opened it, I didn’t just love hearing from him, I loved, loved, loved the three words he put at the bottom of his letter.

He told me about the case, about the date, what the lawyer said, how he was holding up in jail. And then after he signed his name, he just drew three words in big letters, a statement of his own faith. He wrote, “God’s got this. God’s got this.” That’s what he said. He’s facing 20 years behind bars but in that moment, he turned and said, “My God is a God who can use this. My God can save me from this. Even if it turns out bad, I will not be alone because in my Father’s house there are many, many rooms.”

Brothers and sisters, if you are a follower of Jesus, your God has got this too. You will have trouble. But do not let your hearts be troubled because you and I are people who believe in God. Let’s pray.

Our Lord, we’d love for you to take it away, the stress, the problems, the death, the cancer. You say that we can ask you about anything and so we’re asking you, in your mercy, take that stuff away. Make life a little bit easier today. But God, whether you do or don’t, we pray even more for faith; the faith that turns away from the problem and turns to you as the solution. A kind of faith that knows that earth is so temporary, but the Father’s house is eternal. Help us to be distinctly Christian people who have a passionate connection to a big God of glory, and power, and love. It’s so easy to forget that in the moment, God. So, may your spirit open the eyes of our hearts to remember who we are and whose we are. We pray all these things because we need your help and we know that you’re going to give it because we’re asking you today in Jesus’ name. And all God’s people say, “Amen.”