

John Lesson 16 Articles

Separation naturally raises a sense of loneliness, and all sorts of questions flood the minds of those who are left behind. People experiencing the loss of a loved one and the bereavement that ensues often have difficulty integrating their state of loss with their questioning sense of what comes next. The disciples are pictured in these verses as being very human. Thus the words of Jesus that John indicates were intended to calm their anxieties turned out for the disciples to be difficult to synthesize with their earlier experience of relating to Jesus as the expected King (cf. 1:49; etc.).

It is not very different for us humans who have difficulty imagining living life on planet Earth without those who mean most to us. How do we go on in life without them? We humans do not even like to talk about death. Many people, who know better, even shy away from setting up their testamentary documents and making their wills. But death does not go away, and the potential of loneliness does not delay simply because we resist discussing it. Death is a reality we must face forthrightly because this world is not the ultimate reality.

The Farewell Cycle is intended in part to deal with our anxiety concerning such loneliness. Indeed, 14:1–14 confronts this issue squarely. As a result there is scarcely a Christian funeral conducted without some reference to John 14. The fourteen verses in this segment break naturally into three subsections: (1) preparation for the ultimate reality (14:1–3), (2) perplexing questions concerning getting there (14:4–11), and (3) the power of believing in Jesus for our life of discipleship now (14:12–14).¹

Bill Bright used to tell the story of a man who carefully saved his money until he was finally able to travel on a beautiful cruise ship. It was all he could do just to save enough to buy his ticket. Thinking he wouldn't have enough money to buy meals in the ship's fine dining room, he decided to take along some cheese and crackers for food.

For several days he sat in his cabin, watching the stewards go by with carts full of luscious lobster, prime rib, fresh fruits and vegetables. Finally, he couldn't stand it any longer. He reached out and grabbed one of the stewards by the arm and begged him for a plate of food. "Please, help me. I'll go to work, I'll scrub the deck. I'll do anything to get something to eat. My cheese and crackers are turning stale, and I'm starving to death."

"But, sir," the steward replied, "don't you know? Your food comes with your ticket."

Many Christians live the way this passenger did on the cruise ship. They are "cheese and crackers" believers, living off rations when they could be dining on steak and baked potatoes. They don't allow the Holy Spirit to take control of their lives and produce the luscious fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Instead they live in spiritual poverty.

¹ Borchert, G. L. (2002). *John 12–21* (Vol. 25B, p. 102). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.