



# Sermon Growth Guide

**March 14, 2021**

**To Give His Life - Life After Life**

**John 14:1-14**

**Key Verse:** John 14:3

“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.”

**Big Idea:** Live your life knowing there is life after life.

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## Foundations

Can you imagine seeing Jesus look you in the eye and hearing Him say, “Don’t let your heart be troubled”? Jesus reaches out to you and responds to the endless opportunities to accept heart-troublement and says, “No. Instead, choose me. Abide in my love. Know that you are eternally mine and rest. Stop racing.”

Jesus’ call to not let our hearts be troubled is a call to faith, hope and particularity. By faith, we trust that Jesus can help us in our present living. In hope, we make decisions with eternity in mind. Our call to particularity is our call to recognize that Jesus lays claim over us, that He is the sole source of our salvation, our rest, in whom we can cease being troubled.

This Sunday is the one-year anniversary of our shutdown due to the pandemic. It’s hard to process, isn’t it? Most anniversaries remember a past event. This anniversary remembers an event that is still ongoing. We’re not where we were, but we’re not out of the woods yet, either.

Take time to reflect on where your heart is at in all of this. Pray for one another. Together, thank God that your hearts need not be troubled. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide and guard your time as you now turn to open His Word and have it shape you.

## Understanding God’s Word

What claim does Jesus make in verse 6?

How does Jesus describe His relationship with His Father throughout this week’s passage?

What does the phrase “in my name” mean in verses 13 and 14?

## Applying God’s Word

This week’s big idea is, “Live your life knowing there is life after life.”

When we know that we are eternal, our decision-making changes. We make choices that are rooted in a Kingdom, eternal perspective instead of a self-centered, this-is-all-there-is perspective. We begin to love others with the love of Christ instead of chasing our tails in the endless pursuit of “more.”

Discern how your actions are different when your eyes are fixed in your eternal security in Christ.

## Witnessing God’s Word

How does living with an eternal perspective motivate and shape the way you engage those around you in the love of Christ and with the truth of the Gospel?

This is one of the most common passages for me to read and teach at a memorial service. In fact, it's impossible for me to read it without picturing families before me, and a casket or a picture of a dear friend up here next to me. Jesus knew He came to give His life. We are spending this time with Jesus in the final week and final teaching moments of His life in Jerusalem before He was killed. Jesus knew He came to give His life away. Today we see that Jesus knew, that in giving His life away, He was opening eternal life for us. Life after life.

This life is not all there is. Knowing that this life is not all there is changes the way we live. Parents, have you ever caught your kids fighting over the last scoop of ice cream when you know there is another full tub in the freezer? "Stop fighting! There's another tub!" Have you ever raced down the highway late for an appointment risking the lives of all the other drivers just to get there and realize you had the time wrong, you have another hour? Stop racing. There's plenty of time. We have heaven before us. That changes everything. "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Corinthians 15:19). We have life after life, heaven before us, an eternity to know the fulfillment of all our hearts' desires. And heaven in the Bible is not some vague spiritual after-realm. Heaven is this world we know restored and renewed, and us at home in it, like Adam and Eve were at home in the Garden before they fell. We have life after life in Jesus. Stop fighting. There's another tub in the freezer.

Some see it as a weakness to hope in heaven. Here's Tom Holland in his book *Dominion* describing how Karl Marx viewed religion. To Karl Marx: "To believe in a deity was, for any human being, to exist in a condition of humiliating dependence. Religion, like opium, lulled its

addicts into a condition of soporific passivity, numbing them with fantasies of providence and an afterlife." Karl Marx called religion "the opiate of the masses." But what the world sees as a weakness, we know is a strength. We live today with life after life, and that changes the way we live. It changes the way we look at marriage and relationships to know that all our hearts' desires will be fulfilled in eternal life. It changes the way we look at time; there's plenty of time. It changes how we look at money; this life and its resources are just a prologue, a precursor, to an eternal life after life. It changes everything. To live today with heavenly hope, to live now with life after life in view, that means we experience eternal life starting now. Eternity begins today. Jesus has secured for you life after life. Jesus knew this is what He came to do, and He knew what it would cost to do it.

As we dig into this beautiful passage, Jesus speaking here to His disciples at the Last Supper, I want to show you three scandals, three scandalous claims Jesus makes as He declares to us with absolute clarity that He has come to give His life and gain life after life. Three scandals: **(1) The scandal of faith, (2) The scandal of heaven hope and (3) The scandal of particularity.**

**(1) The scandal of faith.** "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me" (John 14:1). You can only say that if you're Jesus. Only Jesus can say "believe also in me." Because only God can say that, and Jesus is God. Jesus clearly knows He is God if He says this. Believe in me. This is the scandal of faith. The modern person wants to be independent. But Jesus says, put your trust in me. Put your faith in me. Lean your life over on me. Rest your whole self on me the way you rest your body on a chair, the way you rest your life on a bridge when you step on it to walk across a canyon, the



way you put your trust in the rope when you go rock climbing and you lean back and repel down. Trust. Faith. Belief. Put it in me, says Jesus. Have you ever walked across the Royal Gorge Bridge? They have those gaps in between the slats. I don't think those are necessary. I think they put them there just to freak you out! But you trust. Jesus has just outlined how shaky and scary things are about to get. But, He says, even when you falter, I won't. Even when the bridge shakes, I won't. Even when your heart trembles, I won't tremble. The Rock of Salvation will remain solid and true. I do not need to be anxious. God holds my life.

**(2) The scandal of heaven hope.** Jesus tells His disciples there is a life after life. "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? 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" (John 14:2-3). When Jesus says "house," His disciples are not picturing the kinds of houses we live in. A household in the ancient near east was like a compound with a central courtyard and lots of apartments and rooms. More important is that this is "My Father's house." This is God's house. Jesus knows He is preparing a life after life for us. While we only get glimpses of it, we know it's coming and we know it's good. We know it is the restoration of all this fallen creation. We know it is the eternal establishment of justice—life the way God wants it. We know that our desires will be fulfilled there. Do you know, even your wrong desires, even your evil or perverted desires have a root in a good and true desire that will be fulfilled in heaven, if not fulfilled in this life through Christ. Someone says, "I use food to push back feelings of loneliness." That's a desire for community, to know and be known, love and be loved. It will be fulfilled in heaven if not on earth. Not with Oreos, but with the actual good thing God has for you at the root and core. Another says, "I use women to make myself feel important," "I use male attention to find

my worth." That's a desire to have value. That will be fulfilled. "I gather money to have power or security." That's a desire to use your gifts for good or to be safe. Those will be fulfilled in heaven. Get it? It is true. This life will not satisfy all your desires. But heaven will be your reward and fulfillment.

It seems scandalous to some. It seems like a foolish escape from the bad things of this life by hoping in the good things of the afterlife. Maybe. I understand the point. But some things in this life are impossible to overcome, and the hope of heaven is real consolation. Think of the woman who can't walk, the boy who can't see, the Veteran who lost a limb. The hope of heaven is a needed hope. Then people are concerned that if we have heaven hope, we won't work to help life here and now, to make things right in the here and now. We'll just say, "Oh well. It will work out in heaven. I don't have to do anything about it." C. S. Lewis addressed this some years ago in *Mere Christianity*: "A continual looking forward to the eternal world is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in': aim at earth and you will get neither."

**(3) The scandal of particularity.** "'You know the way to the place where I am going.' 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'" (John 14:4-6). Pay attention now. Jesus doesn't say, "I know the way," or "I will show you the way." Jesus says, "I am the way." Jesus doesn't say, "I will teach you the truth." Jesus says, "I am the truth." Jesus doesn't say, "I will show you the life." Jesus says, "I am the life." Then he makes the scandalous claim, "No one comes to the Father except through me."

Listen, if religion is a human experiment, if Christianity is just one of many human religious experiments in which we are attempting to fool ourselves, to numb ourselves, to mollify ourselves in soporific slumber with fantasies of a deity who cares about us and a dreamy spiritual afterlife, if that's what this is all about, then it is extremely rude to say what Jesus says. It's mean. To say that your way of fooling yourself is wrong but my way of fooling myself is right. That's just rude. But, if God is there, and if God is reaching out to save His creation, and if Jesus is His Son sent into the world to be our Savior and Redeemer, then it isn't rude at all. It's a matter for celebration. We call that the scandal of particularity, because in a pluralist world, the worst thing you can say is that there is one particular way to come to God. But that's what Jesus claims. He doubles down on it with Philip next. "Jesus answered: 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"' (John 14:9). If you want to see God, look to Jesus. If you want to know the way to God, the way is Jesus.

Jesus came. Jesus died. Jesus rose again. All along the way He knew He had come to give His life away on the cross, and so doing to secure for us eternal life after life. Church, this marks the one year point. One year ago we began our adventure with a global pandemic that reached right here into our own city, and right here into our own church. What have we learned

this year? What has the world learned? How many have died? Now, I know there are many different ways to look at and understand all these numbers. I get it. But stay big picture with me for a minute, will you? 534,000 is the number out there for our country. Worldwide it is 2.6 million. Some periods during the last year, we were seeing over 4,000 deaths reported per day in the U.S. Per day. I remember where I was on 9/11. I saw the first building burning and watched the second plane hit, then heard about the Pentagon and Shanksville. Just under 3,000 died. I was so shaken it changed my life. 4,000 per day. Day after day. How do you live through that without heaven's hope?

Remember this started with verse one: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me" (John 14:1). Do not let your hearts be troubled. Be not anxious. How can you say that, Jesus? Of course my heart is troubled. Look at this world I live in! The last year has been taken from me. My kids' school year has been taken from me. My range of freedoms and liberties have been taken from me. My restaurant, for some, my job, my business has been taken from me. Or even worse, my loved one, my dad, my mom, my life. Taken from me. How can Jesus say, "do not let your hearts be troubled"? He can say it, and He can mean it, because He knows what it will cost to make it so. And He paid the price. Jesus came to give His life. He gave His life away to secure for you, and for me, life after life.

