**WHY ON EARTH GOD? WHY GOD ON EARTH?**

**THE GOSPEL OF JOHN: Chapter 14**

***“Peace At Any Cost”***

I

n 1956 Eddie Lawrence hit #34 on the charts with a tune called “The Old Philosopher.” Sounding like Walter Matthau doing Puff Daddy, it went like this:

“Say there, cousin. You say your old man dressed up as Santa Claus and can't get his belly through the fireplace? And you hang a purple bulb on the tree and 3,000 volts go through ya? And your brother made an animal cage out of your erector set, and Grandma can't get out? Is that what's troublin' you, Bunky? Well, put your head down low, and take a run for it! You’ll never give up, never give up, never give up……that ship!!!”

Maybe you’ve felt like Bunky. At 15 my parents split up, put me on a Greyhound to boarding school way up north in “Yankee country” where I knew no one, not even the language. Leaving friends and a broken family, I was not to return.

Fast forward to age 28. Married (to a girl I met at that school!), with daughters now 5 and 4, and a son in the oven, my program director calls me in at 7 p.m. on a Friday when my Detroit radio show signs off. He mumbles, “I don’t agree with this, but you’re fired.” Hey, I’m tied with AM Drive for the station’s top ratings! Tough, Bunky.

Aug. 18, 1992. I’m 53 and my bride of 31 years is on a gurney, clad in a flimsy hospital gown. The attendant wheels my sweetheart into the elevator. I squeeze her hand and force a goodbye smile, fighting back total collapse. She has breast cancer. Can the surgeon get it?

***From Overwhelmed to Whelmed***

How can you ease your troubled mind when life seems to be in free fall? **What are some of the ways people deal with stress?**

We’re in the Gospel of John, written in the A.D. 90’s by John, the only living member of the twelve disciples. The rest were martyred, except Judas Iscariot who hung himself after betraying his Master.

It’s Thursday night, and being God, Jesus knows He’ll die the next day on that infamous, old rugged cross. He convenes His disciples for “The Last Supper.” “The 12” know the establishment is out to kill their Leader. Yet, immaturely, they spar over which of them is “the greatest.” Meanwhile, He who truly *is* kneels and washes their feet, announcing that one of them will soon betray him to the authorities. Judas evaporates into the night to do that deed. Jesus warns His pal Peter that this night he’ll deny he even *knows* Jesus!

Jesus had said many times He’d have to die. It’s beginning to sink in. But would *they* be crucified too?!!! As Samuel Johnson said, “The prospect of immediate hanging marvelously clears the mind.”

All this leaves our eleven Bunkies frozen in fear, reaching for their gold cards to call the Psychic Hotline. How can we cope under any circumstance? Can we at least go from overwhelmed to just whelmed? **Let’s read John ch. 14:1-31.**

***One-Way Signs on the Highway to Heaven***

***John 14:1-11***

Jesus was often “deeply troubled in spirit” over the sins of the people, hypocrisy among religious leaders, and His looming date with the cross. Even the perfect God-Man got upset. Change can do that. It’s only human. “Don’t let this throw you,” Jesus says. But how do we activate the “Let not” in “Let not your heart be troubled?” He gives this choice to His followers.

When we were studying the New Testament books written by Paul, we met this high-ranking Jewish statesman who tortured and jailed the early Christians. Then came his famous “Damascus Road” conversion experience, morphing him into the world’s first missionary for Christ whose territory was the Mediterranean states.

He was whipped, stoned, shipwrecked, robbed, mobbed, faced death at sea and in deserts, starved, froze and, at the end, was jailed and executed in Rome, because he spoke for Christ. Packing all this credibility, he makes a strong appeal to believers living in Philippi, Greece. **Let’s read it in Philippians 4:6-7.**

Paul’s proven stress-reliever is this: tell God what’s eating you, thank Him for loving for you and including you in His eternal plans, then experience His indescribable peace that will supernaturally cordon off your heart and your mind, our two most vulnerable organs. *That’s* how Christ’s followers pull the trigger on “Let not.”

### The Big House

Pulling into his $50 million, 40-thousand square foot Medina spread, Bill Gates croons, “There’s no place like home.” (No place like MINE, for sure!) Then there’s George Vanderbilt’s 250-room Biltmore Estate in North Carolina’s Blue Ridge Mountains. More than a century old, it’s still America’s largest home.

Jesus says, “Put your mind at ease, friends. I’m returning to my Father’s house to get your room ready.” Ray Stedman writes, “Consider the size of the Father’s ‘house’ –- the universe. Start with our own solar system. The earth orbits the sun at a distance of 93 million miles. It takes *eight minutes* for light to travel from the sun to the earth (it takes more than *five hours* for sunlight to reach the farthest planet, Pluto.) Our own sun is one among approximately *100 billion suns* in our own Milky Way galaxy –- and our galaxy is so vast that it would take a beam of light about *300,000 years* to travel from one side of the galaxy to the other. As unbelievably vast as our own galaxy is, it is just *one of some 100 billion galaxies* in the known universe, and there are millions of light-years of utter emptiness separating each of those billions of galaxies!”

Britain has a new supercomputer devoted to answering “How was the universe created?” With a memory equal to 11,000 CD-ROMs, able to make 10 billion calculations a second, it will recreate the history of the universe, taking data from billions of observations about how stars, gases, galaxies and dark matter behave, then calculate how the universe was formed.

But it doesn’t take a $2 million Sun computer to meet the Son of God, the Creator, who uttered the all-time watershed statement: “I am *THE* Way, *THE* Truth, *THE* Life. Nobody comes to the Father except through Me” –- through His dying in our place on the cross.

*Only* is so narrow-minded, except when someone you love says to you, “You’re the *only* one for me.”

*Only* Jesus lived a sinless life on earth. *Only* Jesus died for our sins. *Only* Jesus rose from the dead to guarantee victory over sin and death for His followers. He says the path to God is narrow, about as narrow as saying that if you step out of an airplane at 35,000 feet, without a chute, DOWN is the *“only”* way you’ll go.

Says Stedman, “Many religious teachers and writings offer a *portion* of the truth…. But none *is* The Truth, The Way, The Life. Only Jesus can make that claim.”

In saying, "No one comes to the Father except through Me," Jesus isn’t arrogantly flapping His lips. Out of love, He’s helping us arrive at Truth, steering us away from fatal attractions.

***You Ain’t Seen Nuthin’ Yet***

***John 14:12-14***

Jesus had walked on water, made the crippled to walk and the blind to see, calmed a storm by speaking to it, fed 5,000 by multiplying a lad’s lunch of fish and bread, cast out demons, even raised the dead.

When Jesus promised His guys would outdo His feats done on earth, He referred to quantity, not quality, because after Jesus returned to heaven, Peter preached in Jerusalem, and 3,000 people gave their lives to Christ in one day! Billy Graham spoke to a million-plus gathered in a public square in Seoul. Jesus never had either of those happen! And He never traveled outside Palestine.

Jesus’ “Ask anything using my name, and I’ll do it” is one of the Bible’s most abused promises. If you could just slap His name on any wish, you’d have lightning in a bottle. That reminds me ….

Congratulations! Some of you prayed to be a millionaire, and this year you did it. Of course, last year you were worth *five* million!

“In my name” is a power of attorney. My Mom was dying, in great pain, and was refused medication. I marched to the nurses’ station, armed her power of attorney, and demanded, “Look, you’re not talkin’ to me, you’re talkin’ to Annie Jane Toles now, so read my lips: ‘Stop my pain!’” Jesus says, “Ask Me for anything that *I’d* ask for, and you got it, baby! Pray like this, and the sky’s the limit.”

***The Comforter: A Blanket Promise***

***John 14:15-21***

If you’d been in Jesus’ sandals, would you leave these Hogan’s Heroes to take your story to the world? Knowing they’d be persecuted and martyred for His cause, Jesus promised He’d send them, and all His followers over the centuries, a “Comforter.”

The Greek word is “paraclete,” “helper” -- one who advises, strengthens, encourages, acts as our Advocate. This is the Holy Spirit of “Father, Son and Holy Spirit” fame, who’s now a permanent resident in all who’ve given God the reins of their life. Better than carrying your honey’s picture in your wallet, it’s like carrying *her*! It’s Jesus’ way of saying, “My child, I’ll be with you ALWAYS.” The God of the universe actually wants to hang out with you and me!

True, you can’t see, touch or hear God, or drop over to His place for dinner. But can you see air (except in L.A.), or time, or the wind?

The only true and living God, who holds the destiny of the world, is irrelevant simply because we mortals can’t *see* Him? Doesn’t blowing Him off like take more faith than believing in Him?

***A Different Brand of Peace***

***John 14:22-31***

Answering the *other* disciple named Judas, also called Thaddeus, Jesus says once we receive Christ’s love, we begin to show it in our lives. We’ll actually start wanting to live His way.

Watch a kid wearing an Ichiro shirt take that patented, round-the-clock practice swing … then tug at his shirt! (Jesus rubs off too.)

He says His Holy Spirit will come along to *teach* His followers, and to *remind* them of all He’d told them. When the writers of the New Testament later put quill to scroll, 10-50 years after Jesus left, that’s what the Spirit did; He reminded them of all Jesus had said and done during His three years on earth, and how that can change and enrich our daily lives.

In these intimate, 11th hour instructions to His compatriots, Jesus says the peace He’ll give doesn’t come from (a) running from reality or (b) toughing it out by being totally self-reliant. It’ll be the ability to be calm, to be settled, thanks to a deep confidence in God.

### “Let’s Get Outta Here”

Jesus has just dumped a truckload of heavy truth on his mates who must be reeling, trying to make sense of it all. With the cross breathing down His neck, He has some options at this point. He can say, “You guys hunker down here, and I’ll go take my medicine.” …. or He can say, “I’m gonna hole up here and go down, if need be, in a hail of bullets, so you all better clear out and find a cave ‘til this blows over. But He said, “C’mon, *let’s* get goin’!” Let’s. Plural.

As the late Dick Halvorson, chaplain of the U.S. Senate, said: “In the final analysis, you’ve got to believe somebody. If you believe in God, either you believe in the God of the Bible or some other god. If you believe in some other god, you believe the Bible is untrustworthy. Who or what do you believe strongly enough to make you force aside the Bible? Will the foundation of your belief stand the test of reality? The eternal welfare of your soul rides on this! Either you trust Jesus Christ, His word and His work, or you do not. If you do not, on whom or what rests your eternal destiny?

“Perhaps you don’t believe in immortality, very well. What is the ground for this belief? Is your foundation reliable enough to justify rejecting Jesus Christ and His gift of eternal life? To put it another way, do you have a *reasonable* faith or just *opinions*?

“Assuming there’s a risk in believing the Bible, in trusting Jesus Christ … is there a lesser risk in your belief? Where does the greater risk lie: in trusting Jesus, or in trusting someone or something else? Who more than Jesus has earned the right to your trust? You have a faith. Is it based on fact or fancy?

“Jesus said, ‘The one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.’” (Luke 6:49)

Jesus invites His disciples to leave the upper room *with* Him. He wants to leave this room *with* you today. Earlier in John (5:24) Jesus told the Jewish leaders, “I say emphatically that anyone who listens to my message and believes in God who sent me has eternal life, and will never be damned for his sins, but has already passed out of death into life.”

From one Bunky to another, Jesus’ invitation is the only one in all the world that ultimately matters, the only that can truly calm your troubled seas, and put life into a context that makes eternal sense.

If you didn’t enter this room with Jesus, you can leave with Him. Tell Him now, in your own words, “Lord, I’m ready to surrender my life and my will to You. Thanks for paying the outrageous price that your Father’s justice demanded so that my sins could be forgiven. I acknowledge my sins. I accept the free gift of Your forgiveness, certainly *not* based on anything I’ve done to earn it. Please show me now how to live Your way. Thank You, Jesus. Amen.”

His Deal

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www.HisDeal.org

george@HisDeal.org

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