

*Then Peter, **turning around, saw a disciple following.** This was the disciple whom Jesus sincerely loved, the one who had also leaned on Jesus' breast at the supper and asked, "Lord, who is going to betray You?" Peter **seeing him,** said to Jesus, "Lord, **what about this man?**" Jesus said to him, "If I desire that he stay until I come, **what is that to you? You follow me.**" (John 21:20-22)*

Why was John following Peter and Jesus?

He was **passionately in love** with Jesus and wanted to **catch every word** while there was time. John was something **like Mary** who washed Jesus' feet, in that he had **come from being a hot-head** controlled by his temper, **to living in wonder** at the **relentless love** Jesus poured on Him continually. He just had to be as close to Jesus as possible every chance he had, and so he **tagged along** behind Jesus and Peter, **listening in** because he just **couldn't get enough** of Jesus.

What about this man?

*John said to him, "Teacher, we saw **someone who doesn't follow us** casting out demons in your name; and **we forbade him,** because **he doesn't follow us.**" But Jesus said, "Don't forbid him, for there is no one who will do a mighty work in my name, and be able quickly to speak evil of me. (Mark 9:38-39)*

You follow me!

In very real, **practical** ways, **what does it mean** for me to **follow** Jesus like He told Peter to do? **Practice** listening to the **still small voice of the Spirit** Jesus sent to **remind me of His words** and instructions and principles of love.

*However when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, **he will guide you** into all truth, for he will not speak from himself; but whatever he hears, he will speak. **He will declare** to you things that are coming. He will **glorify me,** for he will take from what is mine, and will declare it to you. All things whatever the Father has are mine; therefore I said that he takes of mine, and will declare it to you. (John 16:13-15)*

Elijah learned to do this, but at times he **allowed** his own intense **emotions to override** that inner voice and ignore it in favor of **taking things into his own hands.**

***Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.** In all your ways **acknowledge him,** and he will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6 NRSV)*

How can I know what voice in my head is **from Jesus** and not my own cravings or Satan's assertions?

*Beloved, **don't believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God,** because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1)*

There are **principles** involved here that need to be appreciated or else we will **sooner or later blame God** as being our problem. When we **feel like God is silent or ignoring** us, it may be an **invitation to ask Him** what may be **interfering** with our ability to **listen and receive** from His Spirit. Otherwise we will **imagine that God's disposition is against us** and we have to do something to placate Him.

See, the Lord's hand is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. Rather, your iniquities have been barriers between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear. (Isaiah 59:1-2 NRSV)

God is eager to have **open communication** with each one of us. If this is not your experience, **pull back from imagining He might be offended** or is giving you the cold shoulder or manipulating you by withholding love, and **ask Him directly** to show you what is the **real problem**. Be willing to be **completely honest** before God, for **only in honesty** can anyone have a thriving relationship with heaven.

Sometimes the **blockage is due to anger**, which is really linked with a **spirit of unforgiveness** towards someone. It may also be **belief in lies such as shame** that leads one to **imagine they have to earn** enough credits to merit God's attention – one of the biggest lies of the enemy. **Jesus hung out** with more **people who felt condemnation and shame** and who responded **more positively** than the pious religious folk who were confident of their righteous standing with God.

You follow me!

Now is when we need more than ever before, a personal, **intimate, dependent and even desperate** relationship of **clinging tenaciously to God's heart** regardless of what anyone around us is doing.

In this story, **Peter** was already in the process of **returning to his own 'norm'** in life. He felt so **ashamed of his betrayal** of Christ that he felt it was likely **impossible** for him to ever be **qualified** to be called an apostle, so the sooner he got **reestablished in his fishing business** again the better.

Yet **despite all his years of fishing** experience and expertise, his efforts and skill could **not even** accomplish **catch a single fish** out of a lake full of fish. This was **no accident**, for it was time for Peter to have **another reality check** along with a massive **upgrade in his appreciation** of the **kindness** of God. Simply **believing that Jesus was alive** from the dead still had **not landed effectively** in the deep **wounded places** inside him, and he needed, just as we do, an exponential, **radical recalibration** of his thinking and perspective when it came to **how God feels about fallen sinners**. Until Peter **experienced the radical kindness and graciousness** of Jesus and took it seriously for himself, he could **not reflect that same generosity to others** as Jesus intended.

What Peter needed to learn along with all of us, is that what God brings to us is **not a transactional relationship** with Him but a **unilateral covenant** in which His **passionate love is poured out into our hearts unconditionally** without any need for us to do anything to earn it. **All that is needed** on our part is **humble willingness to believe and receive** the truth that we are loved deeply, constantly and relentlessly.

What is vital to **understand in the gospel** is **not just** that God is unconditionally **for us and not against us**, but that it is **just as essential** that we **exercise our will to receive and experience** the transforming **power of this love** so that we may be **prepared to respond above fear** during the coming days of intense crisis, and also be **trained to not react in fear** when we come into the far more intense **presence of unveiled passion** in God's presence. This is all included in what it means to be **ready for Jesus to come**.

*We know and have **believed the love** which God has for us. God is love, and **he who remains in love remains in God**, and God remains in him. (1 John 4:16)*

You follow me!

*From that time, **Jesus began to show** his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and **suffer many things** from the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up. **Peter took him aside**, and began to **rebuke him**, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This will never be done to you."*

*But he turned, and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are **a stumbling block to me**, for you are **not setting your mind on the things of God**, but on the things of men."*

*Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone **desires to come after me**, let him **deny himself**, and **take up his cross**, and **follow me**. For whoever **desires to save his life will lose it**, and whoever will **lose his life for my sake will find it**. For **what will it profit** a man, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his life? Or what will a man give in exchange for his life? (Matthew 16:21-26)*

***It is the spirit that gives life**; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are **spirit and life**. But among you there are **some who do not believe**." For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. And he said, "For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father."*

*Because of this many of his disciples **turned back and no longer went** about with him. So Jesus asked the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, **to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life**. We have come to **believe and know** that you are the Holy One of God." (John 6:63-69 NRSV)*

You follow me!

*I saw, and **behold, the Lamb** standing on Mount Zion, and **with him a number**, one hundred forty-four thousand, **having his name**, and the **name of his Father**, written on their foreheads.*

*I heard a sound from heaven, like the sound of many waters, and like the sound of a great thunder. The sound which I heard was like that of harpists playing on their harps. **They sing a new song** before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the one hundred forty-four thousand, those who had been **redeemed** out of the earth. These are those who were **not defiled** with women, for they are virgins. These are **those who follow the Lamb wherever he goes**. These were **redeemed by Jesus** from among men, the first fruits to God and to the Lamb. In their mouth was found **no lie**, for **they are blameless**. (Revelation 14:1-5)*

***The Lamb** who is in the midst of the throne **shepherds them**, and **leads them to springs of waters of life**. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. (Revelation 7:17)*

When do you prepare for a hurricane? When the winds are up to 60 and the rain is pouring?
The disciples were about to enter the rest of their lives living in storm after **storm of increasingly fierce persecution**, and the Lamb was **preparing them** to meet those storms in the same way Jesus had **weathered every storm already**. But **success would not come by memorizing** right answers or formulating **bullet-proof arguments** to defend **doctrines**. The battle is over our **spirit and heart**.

We are on the cusp of a violent **melt-down of society** that defies all imagination. Yet we live in a **deceptive relative calm** accompanied by the cacophony of incessant **barrages of emotional stimulation** and massive **misinformation** from every direction to **keep us complacent** until we have **no time or bandwidth left** to prepare our hearts and minds to effectively survive the blast about to explode over the whole planet.

The **critical question** for us right now should be, **How do I effectively prepare** for a crisis so intense nothing like it has ever been experienced in the history of the world? **Instead of quibbling** over how soon or what it is going to look like, I believe it is crucial that each of us **make knowing God** personally a far **higher priority** than any other diversion. This must **not be based on fear** however, because **fear poisons our spirit** and **distorts** everything God wants to teach us about what it means to be properly prepared.

*At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who stands for the children of your people; and there shall be **a time of trouble, such as never was** since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time **your people shall be delivered**, everyone who shall be **found written in the book**.*
(Daniel 12:1)