



The Example of Faithfulness
What to Do When Sharing with Bewildered and Befuddled People
John 16:16-33

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Have you ever been told something that you couldn't tell anyone else? Pinky promise sworn to secrecy type of stuff.

I had that happen to me during the run up to Desert Storm. I was the duty Operations Officer after being recalled to active duty as a result of Desert Shield. Early one morning, I received a call to report to a



specific command post for a briefing. Normally briefings do not take place at 2am, but it was not a usual time.

I reported and was a bit surprised when I learned the briefing was to be formal, and only for me. My job was to report the briefing contents to CINCTAC.

What I was told over the following thirty minutes could only be shared with that one person and no one else, oh, and I had to memorize what I was being told and could not take notes. Real fun.

We did the briefing and I briefed CINCTAC on it and then had to begin preparing my boss and the entire Security Forces Squadron for what I knew was coming without being able to say why we needed to do what we needed to do in order to be prepared for what was coming up in less than 24 hours.

I knew all of the details but could share none of them yet we had to urgently prepare, shift schedules and so forth.

But we could not reflect any preparations outwardly at all. The folks who worked with me accepted they needed to do what I was asking them to do, but they were seriously befuddled and bewildered about the urgency.

All bewilderment disappeared that evening as CNN broadcast live from Baghdad as Desert Storm kicked off.

The difficulty of telling folks about something without telling them and preparing without showing that you are, is difficult to do.

Jesus wants His disciples to be situationally aware of what is taking place.

But they have already demonstrated a level of self-centeredness that precluded them from understanding even the clearest statement of what was about to happen.

Mark 8:31–33

“Then Jesus began to tell them that the Son of Man must suffer many terrible things and be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but three days later he would rise from the dead. As he talked about this openly with his disciples, Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things. Jesus turned around and looked at his disciples, then reprimanded Peter. “Get away from me, Satan!” he said. “You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God’s.” (NLT)

They missed that one. But wait, there is more. A few days later, after the transfiguration.

Mark 9:30–34

“Leaving that region, they traveled through Galilee. Jesus didn’t want anyone to know he was there, for he wanted to spend more time with his disciples and teach them. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies. He will be killed, but three days later he will rise from the dead.” They didn’t understand what he was saying, however, and they were afraid to ask him what he meant. After they arrived at Capernaum and settled in a house, Jesus asked his disciples, “What were you discussing out on the road?” But they didn’t answer, because they had been arguing about which of them was the greatest.” (NLT)

Twice He has told them exactly what is about to happen, and they were more interested in who was first, second, and so on. Really?



Mary and Martha got it. Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with a perfume used for embalming purposes and once again, Jesus clearly states fact.

John 12:7–8.

“Therefore Jesus said, “Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.”” (NASB 2020)

But the disciples still were clueless. A few days later, publicly, He said the following.

John 12:27–32

““Now My soul has become troubled; and what am I to say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name.” Then a voice came out of heaven: “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” So the crowd who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, “An angel has spoken to Him!” Jesus responded and said, “This voice has not come for My sake, but for yours. Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself.”” (NASB 2020)

Still His disciples were rather clueless.

He has been talking to them for the past several hours preparing them for what is coming. He has clearly communicated that He is going away. And still the response has been one of wanting to know why they couldn’t go with Him. And now the time is almost there.

His disciples are bewildered and befuddled, and Jesus is rapidly running out of time to prepare them for what is coming. He has just completed briefing them on how life will be in the very near future, but they are in the now, and confused.

This brings us to one final attempt to tell them what is coming.

John 16:16–22

““A little while, and you no longer are going to see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me.” So some of His disciples said to one another, “What is this that He is telling us, ‘A little while, and you are not going to see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me’ ; and, ‘because I am going to the Father’ ?” So they were saying, “What is this that He says, ‘A little while’ ? We do not know what He is talking about.” Jesus knew that they wanted to question Him, and He said to them, “Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, ‘A little while, and you are not going to see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me’? Truly, truly I say to you that you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy! Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one is going to take your joy away from you.”” (NASB 2020)

Jesus has just told His disciples that something is about to take place and you won’t see me, but then something else will take place and you will see me. Is He talking specifically to the disciples and their current situation or is there more to what is being said here.

If you study this and begin to look at some of the commentaries on John, there are numerous conjectures as to what Jesus is talking about here.

It is not surprising that these words of Jesus proved difficult to the men in the upper room. They have puzzled Christians ever since. The main problem concerns the meaning of the coming again of which Jesus speaks. Does he mean that he will come again in the person and work of the Holy Spirit? Or is he referring to the post-resurrection appearances? Or even to the ascension and the parousia? (Morris 1995, 623)



But let's back up a bit.

Jesus is talking to His disciples and preparing them for what is to come. He has just completed teaching them about the coming of the Holy Spirit. As He has told the disciples several times, He has returned to Jerusalem for an appointment and that is why they are now walking to Gethsemane.

But John uses the term "a little while" five times here in just three verses. Surely there must be more to what He is saying here.

Not really, the context shows us this is Jesus, speaking to His disciples, about the immediate future.

What did He mean? He meant that He would be arrested, and they would be scattered like sheep and separated from Him. He'd be crucified and buried. He would be absent a little while and they wouldn't see Him. On the third day He would come back, and so in a little while they would see Him. (McGee 1997, 474)

But all the "little whiles."

Little Whiles

John 16:16a

"A little while, and you no longer are going to see Me..." (NASB 2020)

Jesus is going to be in the grave for three days.

John 16:16b

"...and again a little while, and you will see Me." (NASB 2020)

After three days, Jesus will be resurrected.

Jesus has already talked to them about another little while that He will be gone, that is why all of discussion about the giving of the Holy Spirit. That little while has been almost 2000 years. But that was what Jesus had discussed with them, earlier.

Right here though, He is preparing them for the immediate future. The next three hours and the next three days, "this verse refers to Jesus' departure in death and his return after his resurrection. The 'little while' after which the disciples will see Jesus no more has already been intimated both to the Jews (7:33) and to the disciples (13:33). Jesus will die. But then 'after a little while' his disciples will again see him: Jesus will rise from the dead." (Carson 1991, 543) And they are still confused.

Jesus made His statement to them, and that began a multi-person conversation amongst the disciples who are talking out loud trying to reason through and figure out what He has just told them.

John 16:17-18

"So some of His disciples said to one another, "What is this that He is telling us, 'A little while, and you are not going to see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me' ; and, 'because I am going to the Father' ?" So they were saying, "What is this that He says, 'A little while' ? We do not know what He is talking about." (NASB 2020)

They have no supernatural perspective going on here at all. Not one bit.



Even though Jesus has clearly and on multiple occasions told them exactly what is going down, they never comprehended any of it. They are sticking with their perceptions of a Messiah who conquers, not one who suffers. They cannot conceive of a suffering Messiah who will die, and then rise from the dead, and then turns around and leaves again in favor of the Holy Spirit picking up where He left off.

They are seriously bewildered, befuddled and downright perplexed.

Being gumfuzzled is a real thing for them at this point.

What was obscure to them at the time, then, and was soon made clear is certainly clear to us now, for after a short while he suffered, and they didn't see him; again, after a short while he rose, and they saw him. (Augustine 2020, 389)

John 16:19–20

“Jesus knew that they wanted to question Him, and He said to them, “Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, ‘A little while, and you are not going to see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me’? Truly, truly I say to you that you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy!” (NASB 2020)

It is always a really fun day when you are addressing a group and have told them, more than once what you intend to do, and while you are still talking, they begin conjecturing with each other what it is you said and what you really meant.

That is a popular sport in this country. Whenever there is an official speech made by the President, like when he does his annual report to Congress on the state of the union. What the President really meant was...

I used to run into this in the corporate world. The CEO would give a quick talk to the employees intending to end rumors and encourage everyone about the work they had in front of them. But instead, and I have watched this and even participated, you start asking each other just exactly what did he mean when he said we would have to tighten our belts. Are layoffs coming?

The problem, we were not even close to thinking the same line of thought as the boss was. He wanted us to be more efficient with what we already had, but because we desperately needed more staff just to be able to do that, it sounded like we were not only not going to get what we needed but lose what we had. Or to quote Alan Greenspan, “I know you think you understand what you thought I said but I'm not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant”.

Or to put this another way, I am responsible for what I spoke, but not for what you understood. Jesus was clearly providing a heads up to the disciples.

Jesus, because He is God, understood where the line of discussion was going. He knew that His disciples wanted to interrogate Him on this point. But they were reluctant to go there since some of what they had asked just recently they didn't understand either.

He adds more context to His explanation providing an example.

In other words, He answers their unasked questions.

They are about to be witnesses to the single most important event of all history. “Jesus' followers will grieve as at a funeral (the women in Mark 16:1 were planning to anoint a corpse, expecting nothing). The



world, also thinking only they have rid themselves of a blasphemous troublemaker, will be filled with joy at their victory. However, mere hours later, God will raise Jesus from the dead and the glorious Risen One will appear to them. And all the sorrow will turn to exuberant joy at the victory that God has accomplished in his Son.” (Osborne 2018, 381)

Jesus, in His example, makes use of what was previously said by the prophet Isaiah centuries before depicting the future deliverance of Israel at the end of the age.

Isaiah 26:17–19

“Just as a pregnant woman writhes and cries out in pain as she gives birth, so were we in your presence, LORD. We, too, writhe in agony, but nothing comes of our suffering. We have not given salvation to the earth, nor brought life into the world. But those who die in the LORD will live; their bodies will rise again! Those who sleep in the earth will rise up and sing for joy! For your life-giving light will fall like dew on your people in the place of the dead!” (NLT)

Isaiah 66:14

“When you see these things, your heart will rejoice. You will flourish like the grass! Everyone will see the LORD’s hand of blessing on his servants— and his anger against his enemies.” (NLT)

The disciples are about to go through a time of grief like they have never before experienced. They will firmly believe they got it wrong about the Messiah and all their dreams have now been destroyed right before their eyes. Not only will they be grieving over Jesus, but over everything else they had each, individually, connected to Him.

Life as they knew, they believed, had just ended. This is in their future and Jesus is plainly telling them this. But He also reveals to them that in a short time, that grief will turn into a joy that will never be taken away. World changing, death defying joy.

“Before Jesus’s crucifixion, his accompanying group of male followers abandoned and even denied him. While the women went to Jesus’s tomb by themselves on the first day of the week, presumably to finish the burial process (Luke 24:1), the men were in hiding because they feared reprisal from the Jews (John 20:19). However, just a short time later there was an undeniable contrast in the behavior of especially the men, with the relevant texts claiming that many and perhaps all of these followers were altered radically, with no recanting as far as is known. Boldness and faith replaced their previous fear, with their lives being characterized by a new purpose. They proclaimed their message and were willing to die for it.” (Habermas 2024, 522)

John 16:22

“Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one is going to take your joy away from you.” (NASB 2020)

This event is imminent, so much so, that Jesus is speaking as if the grief is current. Little do they know it is only a couple of hours away.

He intends to breakthrough that grief and mourning. All is lost, or so they think, then Jesus will show up and all of that pain will be gone, forever. “Not only will seeing Jesus again on the other side of the cross put an end to the disciples’ confusion as to Jesus’ departure and the two “little whites,” but also Jesus having died and been raised will open for them the way to prayer to the Father in Jesus’ name.” (Köstenberger 2004, 477)

What they will see in a few days will change them. “The New Testament resurrection language is the language of sight: the disciples had witnessed the victory with their very own eyes! And it really, truly worked! Somehow, these occurrences transformed Jesus’s followers from their initial shock, despair, and



doubt to their firm convictions that they had seen their master alive after his death by crucifixion. It was the disciples' sincere belief that Jesus had appeared to them that accounted for their zeal in preaching and teaching. The speed with which it happened provides some small indication of how powerful it was in person." (Habermas 2024, 532)

John 16:22–24

"Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one is going to take your joy away from you. And on that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full." (NASB 2020)

Jesus is once again talking about how everything changes because of the cross and the resurrection. Redemption, which Jesus will achieve on the cross for us, changes even how prayer is done.

Jesus has already said He is going to return to the Father.

He also has said He will send the Holy Spirit. But what He says here, ties those two things together with what He has already said about abiding in Christ as a necessity for doing life.

Jesus is now talking about direct access to the Father in prayer. No longer is an intermediary or priest required, now access is personal and direct through Christ as His representatives.

No nonsense with going to someone, like Mary, and asking them to pray on your behalf. If we are in Christ, then we are His representatives here on this planet and we have direct access. Wow!

By going to the Father and returning with the Spirit, Jesus would bring the disciples directly to God: the Father would give their requests directly if they asked as Jesus' representatives instead of depending on Jesus to ask for them. This "directness" does not imply lack of mediation in all senses; rather, disciples come to the Father through Jesus (14:6), but as long as they remain in Jesus (14:20, 21–24), they remain in the Father's presence, with direct access to him in prayer. (Keener 2012, 1046)

What that really means is new and earthshattering. For the believer, if we abide in Christ and remain in Him, we have direct access to the Father. We can enter the throne room of the universe and bring our requests directly to God.

The Father whom they ask Himself loves them, is utterly committed to them in His Son, and is the One with whom the Son will be present. This all is a powerful guarantee of the Father's fervent will to answer (16:27). It accords with the Father's honor and goodness to give the Holy Spirit in Luke 11:5–13. (Rosscup 2008, 1849)

And it gets better. Because Jesus is sending the Holy Spirit, once that event takes place, the disciples will finally be able to get it. No more parables, no more indirect speech, the Holy Spirit enables the disciples to deal with truth directly.

That means that as we abide in Christ and allow Him, through the Holy Spirit, to empower us and direct us, we have that same privilege.

John 16:25

"These things I have spoken to you in figures of speech; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech, but will tell you plainly about the Father." (NASB 2020)



Previously, Jesus explained how He has shown them the Father. As they have lived and done life with Jesus, they learned about the Father and saw the Father in Jesus. But when the Holy Spirit is given, something different takes place because the Holy Spirit inside of us enables us to understand.

Now He can explain about the Father. Post resurrection, exaltation and giving of the Spirit, the relationship with Jesus, changes. What they experienced in the past was nothing compared to what they will experience in the future.

Jesus, even as He has been briefing the disciples about what is to come, has been using figurative language. But there is a time coming where that all ends. He talked about the way to the Father using vineyards, vines and abiding and a little while. Plain speech was at hand.

John 16:26–28

“On that day you will ask in My name, and I am not saying to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father. I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father.” (NASB 2020)

Jesus was not denying that He would intercede for His disciples with the Father (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; cf. 1 John 2:1). His point was that the Father’s love for them would move Him to grant their petitions, in addition to Jesus’ intercession and sponsorship (cf. 15:9–16). Believers have a direct relationship with the Father as well as with the Son and the Spirit (cf. Rom. 5:2). (Constable 2003, Jn 16:26)

What we, as believers, need to understand is this. Jesus loves us and He died on the cross for us so that we could spend eternity with Him. Then He rose from the dead reflecting His victory over the grave and showing us that we too, in Christ, will experience that same victory. What is taking place is a realization of a simple truth Jesus expressed to Nicodemus much earlier.

John 3:16–18

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him. The one who believes in Him is not judged; the one who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” (NASB 2020)

The Father loves us, because we love Jesus. We believe the Father sent Jesus to redeem us and once that mission was accomplished, He returned to the Father sending us the Holy Spirit to continue the mission.

John 16:28

“I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father.” (NASB 2020)

Here in verse 28, Jesus speaks very plainly and summarizes what His mission has been. But there is now no doubt as to where He is going.

He came to earth as God incarnate acting as God’s unique agent to communicate God’s message to humans. He has revealed Himself to us. And now, He is returning back to the Father.

John 16:29–33

“His disciples said, “See, now You are speaking plainly and are not using any figure of speech. Now we know that You know all things, and that You have no need for anyone to question You; this is why we believe that You came forth from God.” Jesus replied to them, “Do you now believe? Behold, an hour is



coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” (NASB 2020)

They do not admit to understanding what He just said, but they do reflect a confidence in Him. They say they now truly believe that He came from the Father.

But do they? They are about to be tested like they have never been tested before. Even Jesus reflects His concern for their avowed faith when He says, “Do you now believe?”

After saying that, because He truly knows their hearts, Jesus begins to tell them what it is they will be doing in the next few hours. Hiding.

Jesus tells them very plainly what the limitations of their faith will be. At the moment He needs them the most, they will abandon Him in favor of their own skins. Jesus tells them the Father is still with Him, but He acknowledges that they will indeed leave Him, and all fail the test.

Coming up in the next few hours, Jesus will be arrested, and His followers will head for the hills. Peter will even deny Jesus multiple times. “From that night until two full days afterward, these men were apparently not going out in public. They were hiding in a state of confusion, bewilderment, and despondency because their master had been unexpectedly and brutally captured, slain, and taken from them.” (Habermas 2024, 542)

They are going to fail and have tribulation because that is what the world always produces without fail. Jesus predicted their leaving Him, but He loved them no matter what and here He is, about to go to the cross, and He is promising men who will truly need peace over the next three days, that they will have peace.

And, in the full knowledge that they would act in this way, he had promised them peace. The world will infallibly bring them “trouble.” That is its characteristic. But he can bid them “take heart!” He had overcome the world, the perfect tense denoting an abiding victory. This statement, spoken as it is in the shadow of the cross, is audacious. The cross would seem to the outsider to be Jesus’ total defeat. He sees it as his complete victory over all that the world is and can do to him. He goes to the cross not in fear or in gloom, but as a conqueror. (Morris 1995, 633)

What Jesus is about to do on the cross is an achievement. It is the culmination of centuries of planning, and it will achieve all that the Old Testament points to, the redemption of mankind.

Jesus makes several promises to us here in verse 33. As we follow Him and abide in Him, we have peace. The world may be freaking out, but for the Christian who is resting in the Lord, peace.

Then there is the promise that we know is there and we would like it to go away. That is that for us, for believers, the world, the world system and all it stands for, it will be a source of tribulation for us.

But then we come to the third promise here, the one we jump and claim. We need to be courageous, to take courage, because Jesus has overcome the world. When Jesus says that He uses the perfect verb tense. Jesus is describing His overcoming the world on the cross as “a completed verbal action that occurred in the past but which produced a state of being or a result that exists in the present.” (Heiser and Setterholm 2013) And he is saying this before going to the cross. But what He achieved on the cross is a present reality for us today. In Christ, we share in that victory over the world.



1 John 5:4–5

“For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (ESV)

Are you an overcomer? Or are you without peace and experiencing the tribulation of the world. That can all change right now.

Romans 3:21–24

“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

ABC’s of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.



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