

“Listen Very Carefully”

John 21:23

December 14, 2014

Context:

John 21:21-22 (NASB)

²¹ So Peter seeing him *said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?"

²² Jesus *said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!"

Text:

John 21:23 (NASB)

²³ Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but *only*, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?"

Because of this, the rumor spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?" (NIV)

“Did God really say...” = birthplace of all sin & fallen-ness.....

Do not add or subtract from God’s Word... or else! (Revelation 22:18)

*** See Matthew Henry's contribution

Beware misquoting God (and His Word)

*** Show the authority of Scripture

*** Show why Scripture is best interpreted by Scripture

Most heresy has seeds of the truth...

*** Show dangers of adding bad traditions to good truth

- Peter.... Pope
- "Body of Christ" ... Transubstantiation
- Gospel promises... Prosperity gospel
- Christ's grace... Cheap grace
- Pharisaical legalism
- 600+ Jewish laws added to the O.T. Scriptures

Importance of not only hearing God, but hearing correctly!

Good intentions do not guarantee trustworthiness

Determine the consequences of mis-quoting/applying God's Word

- Peter is likely the disseminator of the mis-quote...
- "The real test of truth-telling is not the "teller" but the truth." - JDP

God uses John/us to confront (the) falsehood and correct it/them!
Misquoting/misleading people inevitably leads them to not believe/trust the Lord when what is said/taught is disproved... (that is why John is sure to correct this falsehood – had he not, when he died, many would be given a "reason" not to trust Christianity).

Be careful how you interpret “circumstances” – the fact that John outlived all the other apostles (and the destruction of Jerusalem) might lead people into believing something that still was not true.

See King Saul (not waiting as God said... close but not obedience)

See Akin (took spoils of war... didn't think it was that bad – cf. Eve)

“Christian heresies” are often close... but ALWAYS wrong!

CRITICAL: Be sure to show how to rectify the problem(s)
***** Truth in Love ***** (Ephesians 4:15!)

John 21... Introductory thoughts:

CHAPTER 21 IS about discipleship and leadership. As its story unfolds, Peter remains in the spotlight (along with the Beloved Disciple, John), modeling for us what it means to shepherd the flock of Christ.

- NIV Application Commentary

A biblical worldview is our goal...
so that we will love & live God's Word.

A Biblical World-View

A. LEARN... God's Word/Ways

2 Timothy 3:16-17 = Submit to the Authority of God's Word/Bible

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, **17**so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Genesis 1:1 & John 1:1ff = Accept Creator God, Creator Christ

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

(Genesis 1:1)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

(John 1:1)

Matthew 3:16-17 = Biblical evidence of the Trinity

*And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; **17**and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son,^c with whom I am well pleased."*

Genesis 3 & John 3 = Sin & Salvation (you must be “born again”)

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1ff)

And I will put enmity/hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” (Genesis 3:15)

Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3)

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (...John 3:36)

John 14:6 = Christology (Christ alone saves)

Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

Matthew 5:17 = There’s NO “cheap grace” in the Gospel!

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

“Roman Road”

Romans 3:23 = *For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.*

Romans 5:8 = *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

Romans 6:23 = *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Romans 8:1 = *Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Romans 10:9 = *If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus as Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Romans 12:1-3 = *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God--this is your true and proper worship.*

Jeremiah 1:4-5 = *Biblical proof of life in the womb & it's value...*

*4*Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, *5*"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

Romans 10:17 = *Faith is found & fertilized in God's Word*

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

John 8:31-36 = God's Truth sets souls eternally free!

31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, **32** and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." **33** They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?" **34** Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. **35** The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. **36** So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Matthew 25:46 = Heaven OR Hell (only 2 eternal destinations)

"Then they (the unrighteous, non-repentant sinners) will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous (biblical believers) to eternal life."

Ephesians 2:8-10 = THE Gospel (explanation & implication)

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God -- not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Galatians 5:22-24 = The Root of Christ = the Fruit of the Spirit

*the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. **24** And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 = THE Gospel (explanation & implication)

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Proverbs 12:21 = Christian's eternal confidence & perspective

No harm befalls the righteous, But the wicked are filled with trouble.

Ephesians 4:14-16 = Truth-in-Love (all of ministry's foundation)

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Galatians 1:6-9 = God curses counterfeit deceivers

6I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! 9As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!

B. LOVE... God's Word/Ways

1 John 3:16 = Jesus defined/defines love for us

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

John 3:16 = God's sacrificial love in action (a.k.a. the Gospel)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Mark 12:30-31 = God's Greatest Commandments

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Matthew 25:40 = Love's Christ-like perspective

"The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did (acts of kindness) to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.' (vv.31-46)

1 John 3:18 = Love's litmus test (BE the "real deal")

Dear children, let us not love with words or talk but with actions and in truth.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a = "Love is...."

4Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8Love never fails.

John 17:20-21 = Unity is love's validating purpose: BE the Church

"My prayer is not on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

John 14:15 = Christian love obeys Christ... (true love obeys)

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 = Prayer (love prays-to & praises the Lord)

Pray without ceasing.

Psalm 23 = Loving Presence of the Good Shepherd brings Peace

1 *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. 3 He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*

4Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

5You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

C. LIVE... God's Word/Ways
(BE-the-Church / Believe in Christ)

Acts 1:8 = Witnesses are empowered, global, missional martyrs.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

John 17:17 = God grows His children with His Word/Truth

"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 = God's people pray-to & praise the Lord!

Pray without ceasing.

1 John 2:6 = Christians MUST predominantly walk like Christ

the one who says he abides in Him (Jesus) must walk in the same manner as He (Jesus) walked.

Matthew 10:16 = Christians are to BE... Shrewd AND Innocent

"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.

Romans 12:12 = Christian "calibration" & attitude adjustments

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Proverbs 3:5-6 = Surrender to victory, Submit to straight paths

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

John 13:35 = Christianity is Koinonia (supernatural love/unity)

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

John 7:24 = Discernment (righteous judgment is commanded)

"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

Philippians 4:12 = Christianity brings Contentedness...

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

Galatians 2:20 = Christians are Crucified, dead-to-self servants

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Luke 9:23 = Christians are Cross-carriers (self-denying followers)

Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow Me.

Ephesians 6:10-11ff = Full Armor of God (prepare for war)

Finally, be strong in the Lord & in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

2 Corinthians 13:5 = Christians stand the test of God's Word

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves! Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you--unless, of course, you fail the test?

Ezekiel 33:1-11 = "Watchman on the wall..."

1The word of the LORD came to me: 2"Son of man, speak to your people and say to them, If I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them, and make him their watchman, 3and if he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people, 4then if anyone who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. 5He heard the sound of the trumpet and did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But if he had taken warning, he would have saved his life. 6But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand. 7"So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. 8If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. 9But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn

from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul. 10“And you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, Thus have you said: ‘Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we rot away because of them. How then can we live?’ 11Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?

Philippians 4:13 = If He calls you to it, He'll empower you for it!

I can do all this through Him/Christ who gives me strength.

2 Peter 1:3 = No excuses...

By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for life and godliness.

Matthew 5:13-16 = Salt & Light (Christian living)

“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. 14“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 28:18-20 = Great Commission (...the Christian mission)

*Then Jesus came to them & said, "All authority in heaven & on earth has been given to Me. **19**Therefore go & make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father & of the Son & of the Holy Spirit, **20**and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Acts 20:24 = Christian faith focuses on fulfilling the Commission

I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace.

Titus 1:10-13 = Loving, Assertive, Essential Confrontation

*For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, **They must be silenced**, because they are disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach--and that for the sake of dishonest gain.... This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith...*

Hebrews 13:17 = Biblical "submission" within the Church

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

Daniel 3:15-25ff = Believers live out bold & unwavering Faith

if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?”
16Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. **17**If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. **18**But even if He does not rescue us, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.” **25** He answered and said, “But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.”

2 Corinthians 2:15 = Christians are the Aroma of Christ

For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing,

Luke 10:5-6ff = Per Christ, Christians “fish for” Persons-of-Peace

*Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ **6**And if a person of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you.*

Hebrews 12:1 = Christians commit to God’s best, not just our good

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let

us throw off everything that hinders (encumbrances) and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with endurance/perseverance the race that is marked out for us,

2 Timothy 2:2 = Biblical Discipleship is “missional-multiplication”

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

MATTHEW HENRY:

The mistake which arose from this saying of Christ, that that disciple should not die, but abide with the church to the end of time; together with the suppressing of this motion by a repetition of Christ's words, [v. 23](#). Observe here,

(1.) The easy rise of a mistake in the church by misconstruing the sayings of Christ, and turning a supposition to a position. Because John must not die a martyr, they conclude he must not die at all.

[1.] They were inclined to expect it because they could not choose but desire it. **Quod volumus facile credimus-We easily believe what we wish to be true.** For John to abide in the flesh when the rest were gone, and to continue in the world till Christ's second coming, they think, will be a great blessing to the church, which in every age might have recourse to him as an oracle. When they must lose Christ's bodily presence, they hope they shall have that of his beloved disciple; as if that must supply the want of his, forgetting that the blessed Spirit, the Comforter, was to do that. Note, We are apt

to dote too much on men and means, instruments and external helps, and to think we are happy if we may but have them always with us; whereas God will change his workmen, and yet carry on his work, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of men. There is no need of immortal ministers to be the guides of the church, while it is under the conduct of an eternal Spirit.

[2.] Perhaps they were confirmed in their expectations when they now found that John survived all the rest of the apostles. Because he lived long, they were ready to think he should live always; whereas that which waxeth old is ready to vanish away, [Hebrews 8:13](#).

[3.] However, it took rise from a saying of Christ's, misunderstood, and then made a saying of the church. Hence learn:

First, The uncertainty of human tradition, and the folly of building our faith upon it. Here was a tradition, an apostolical tradition, a saying that went abroad among the brethren. It was early; it was common; it was public; and yet it was false. How little then are those unwritten traditions to be relied upon which the council of Trent hath decreed to be received with a veneration and pious affection equal to that which is owing to the holy scripture. Here was a traditional exposition of scripture. No new saying of Christ's advanced, but only a construction put by the brethren upon what he did really say, and yet it was a misconstruction. Let the scripture be its own interpreter and explain itself, as it is in a great measure its own evidence and proves itself, for it is light.

Secondly, The aptness of men to misinterpret the sayings of Christ. The grossest errors have sometimes shrouded themselves under the umbrage of incontestable truths; and the scriptures themselves have ben wrested by the unlearned and unstable.

We must not think it strange if we hear the sayings of Christ misinterpreted, quoted to patronise the errors of antichrist, and

the impudent doctrine of transubstantiation-for instance, pretending to build upon that blessed word of Christ, This is my body.

(2.) The easy rectifying of such mistakes, by adhering to the word of Christ, and abiding by that. So the evangelist here corrects and controls that saying among the brethren, by repeating the very words of Christ. He did not say that the disciple should not die. Let us not say so then; but he said, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? He said so, and no more. Add thou not unto his words. **Let the words of Christ speak for themselves, and let no sense be put upon them but what is genuine and natural; and in that let us agree.**

Note, The best end of men's controversies would be to keep to the express words of scripture, and speak, as well as think, according to that word, [Isaiah 8:20](#). Scripture language is the safest and most proper vehicle of scripture truth: the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, [1 Corinthians 2:13](#).

As the scripture itself, duly attended to, is the best weapon wherewith to wound all dangerous errors (and therefore deists, Socinians, papists, and enthusiasts do all they can to derogate the authority of scripture), so the scripture itself, humbly subscribed to, is the best weapon-salve to heal the wounds that are made by different modes of expression concerning the same truths.

Those that cannot agree in the same logic and metaphysics, and the propriety of the same terms of air, and the application of them, may yet agree in the same scripture terms, and then may agree to love one another.

- Matthew Henry's Commentary

Again, Jesus tells the apostle to *follow*, and this time the form is emphatic (cf. [21:19](#)) To paraphrase: "Peter, this matter is not your concern; it is mine. *You* have one duty: Follow me."

[John 21:23](#) corrects what must have been an unusual misinterpretation of Jesus' words that had circulated for some time in the church. No doubt among John's followers many believed that their beloved leader would not die but would remain until Christ returned. Disciples in the Johannine church could thus keep their hope in the Second Coming alive and then increase their anticipation as John grew in age.

The problem, of course, is that once John died and Christ had not returned, the enemies of the church would have ample opportunity to ridicule Christian believers ([2 Peter 3:4](#); cf. [Matt. 16:28](#); [1 Thess. 4:15](#)). The Gospel repeats Jesus' original words again ([21:23b](#)), suggesting that the same exhortation given to Peter perhaps should come to devout Christians. The Gospel uses an emphatic "but" in the second half of the verse (Gk. *alla*) as if to say, "*But* let's be clear—Jesus did *not* say that John would not die." As Peter should not speculate about John, so too should John's followers abandon any eschatology linked to the apostle's fate.

Peter and the church. Peter's restoration to Christ makes possible his service to the church. Jesus' command to feed and tend his sheep becomes Peter's mandate for life. He affirms his love for Jesus, but now he understands that this means a great deal more. Jesus does not come to us as a "single person" (as it were), unattached. He is "married," and the bride whom he loves and for which he sacrifices himself is the church ([Eph. 5:25](#)) To be in a relationship with Christ and to love him genuinely

means that we must also love the church. For us to disparage the church is no more acceptable to Jesus than for us (in a human context) to disparage our good friend's spouse.

Peter—and each of us—is called to embrace the body of Christ, to love it, to tend it, and to protect it. A quick glimpse at Peter's letters gives some insight into the depth of his commitment to this mission. In later years Peter wrote to later church leaders who were expected to take up the same commission:

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. ([1 Peter 5:1-4](#))

The chief images of [John 21](#) (fish and sheep) both speak to us about the work of the church. We must gather up those to whom Christ directs us and nurture those who live in his flock. This is labor, divinely directed labor that must be inspired by our devotion to Christ.

- NIV Application Commentary

21:21-23 Like the final chapter of Matthew, the closing verses of John's Gospel dispel a rumor. Matthew denied that Jesus' disciples stole His body ([Mt 28:11-15](#); cp. [Mt 27:62-66](#)) while John sought to lay to rest the rumor that Christ had promised to return during John's lifetime.

- HCSB Study Bible.

21:23 Early church history reports that after John spent several years as an exile on the island of Patmos, he returned to Ephesus where he died as an old man, near the end of the first century.

- Life Application Study Bible.

Infamous “misquotes” from the Bible:

“The Lord helps those who help themselves.”

"Cleanliness is next to godliness"

No, Jesus did not say this in the Sermon on the Mount nor in any of his teachings recorded in the Gospels. This Bible misquote might have its root in James 4:8: "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded."

"Blessed and highly favored"

Paul, credited with writing many of the New Testament letters, never wrote to the churches in Corinth or Rome declaring Christians to be "blessed and highly favored." As good as the phrase may sound, it's not in the Bible.

"All things work together for good"

This is another passage in which context is key — what things work together for whose good? Romans 8:28 reads in full: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

1. Judge not, lest ye be judged. Matthew 7:1

The mother of all Biblical misrepresentations. Let us "twist not a scripture lest we be like the devil" (Paul Washer). The most frequently misused verse in the Bible is without question, Matthew 7:1. Often misstated as "Judge not." or "Jesus said don't judge." The most humorous aspect of the misuse of this verse is that it invariably occurs in such a way that the person misusing the verse, in referencing it, actually declares a judgment on the person they feel is being judgmental.

Additionally, If you're perceptive enough you will notice as well that Jesus Himself is passing judgment here on those who improperly judge. Clearly this interpretation of this verse doesn't make sense.



The verse actually reads “Judge not that ye be not judged.” This verse is often swung as a gavel to bring about an immediate cessation of discussion of another person’s behavior. The incorrect understanding of the verse is that we are completely forbidden to call to attention any areas in others’ behaviors that demand correction. This is a clear misinterpretation of Christ’s teaching. Read the words of Christ:

John 7:24 “Judge not according to the appearance, but **judge righteous judgment.**”

Matthew 7:16 “You will **recognize** them by their fruits...”

Luke 17:3 “Be on your guard! If your brother sins, **rebuke** him; and if he repents, forgive him.”

Matthew 18:15-17 “If your brother sins, go and **show him his fault** in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Clearly here, Christ says we are to judge righteously, recognize and discern good from evil by peoples’ actions, and rebuke our brothers and sisters when they sin. To rebuke a brother we must first identify that they have sinned. To identify a person’s sin, we must obviously first judge their behavior. Without the authority to judge others’ behaviors there is no permissible authority by which we could uphold governing laws, discipline children, select leaders, choose teachers and childcare providers, or discern which Bible teachers are profitable to listen to. Our selections of spouses, friends, and business partners are all based on judgments of character and ethics. Christ said, “You will know them by their fruits,” meaning we are to discern between a person who bears fruit, and a person who does not.

Leviticus 19:15 You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but **in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.**

To see what Jesus is actually saying when He says, “Judge not that ye be not judged,” it is helpful to read the subsequent verses:

Matthew 7:2-5 “For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the log in your own eye? 4 How can

you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a log in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

We see now that Matthew 7:1 is not a warning against the judging of any action or behavior. It is a warning against self-deception, self righteousness, and hypocrisy. If you are going to correct someone then you must expect to be held to the same standard. If you judge with harshness, you can expect to be judged harshly. If you judge with gentleness and good intent, your brothers and sisters are more likely to return the kindness. Note that a speck of sawdust and a log are both of the same essence...wood. Jesus here is referring to the hypocrisy of casting judgment on another for a sin of the same essence as a sin of which you yourself are guilty. Jesus declares here that You must first overcome this sin in your own life before you will be any help to your brother. Notice in verse 5 that Christ does not prohibit us from pointing out our brother’s sin, or from assisting him in removing it. Jesus does not command we say nothing about the speck in our brother’s eye. Jesus commands us to first address this particular issue in our own life, and then assist our brother in love.

1 Thessalonians 5:14 *And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.*

Galatians 6:1 *Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.*

Verse 23. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die—into which they the more easily fell from the prevalent expectation that Christ's second coming was then near at hand.

yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die—The Evangelist is jealous for His Master's honor, which his death might be thought to compromise if such a misunderstanding should not be corrected.

A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments.

Verse 23. *Then went this saying,*

1st. From the *words* of Jesus, which might be easily misunderstood to mean that he should not die; and,

2nd. **It was probably confirmed when it was seen that John survived *all* the other apostles, had escaped all the dangers of persecution, and was leading a peaceful life at Ephesus. This mistake John deemed it proper to correct before he died, and has thus left on record what Jesus *said* and what he *meant*.**

Barnes' Notes on the New Testament.

The Lord rebuked Peter and reminded him that his job was to follow, not to meddle into the lives of other believers. Beware when you get your eyes off the Lord and start to look at other Christians! "Looking unto Jesus" should be the aim and practice of every believer ([Heb. 12:1-2](#)).

To be distracted by ourselves, our circumstances, or by other Christians, is to disobey the Lord and possibly get detoured out of the will of God. Keep your eyes of faith on Him and on Him alone.

This does not mean that we ignore others, because we do have the responsibility of caring for one another ([Phil. 2:1-4](#)). Rather, it means that we must not permit our curiosity about others to distract us from following the Lord. God has His plan for us; He also has plans for our Christian friends and associates. How He works in their lives is His business. Our business is to follow Him as He leads us (see [Rom. 14:1-13](#)).

Jesus did not say that John would live until His return, but that is the way some of the misguided believers understood it. **More problems are caused by confused saints than by lost sinners! Misinterpreting the Word of God only creates misunderstanding about God's people and God's plans for His people.**

However, there is a somewhat enigmatic quality to what the Lord said about John. Jesus did not say that John would live until He returned, nor did He say that John would die before He returned. As it was, John lived the longest of all the disciples and did witness the Lord's return when he saw the visions that he recorded in the Book of Revelation.

Bible Exposition Commentary - Bible Exposition Commentary – Be Transformed (John 13-21).

Evidently Christ's prediction of Peter's martyrdom prompted concern about what would happen to his intimate friend, John. Therefore he

asked **Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?"** Jesus' abrupt and censoring reply "**If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?"** was not an answer, but it was a rebuke that made it clear to Peter that what was to happen to John was none of his business. If John lived until the second coming, it had no bearing on his responsibility. Reiterating His command from [verse 19](#), Jesus said emphatically, "**You follow Me!**" Peter's attention was not to be on anyone else, but on his own devotion and duty to Jesus Christ. All believers will do well to embrace this truth that the Lord has a unique plan for each of His followers.

John finished the inspired gospel by answering a few final questions that bring closure to his account. The Lord's hypothetical response to Peter caused a rumor to go **out among the brethren that that disciple would not die**. John was quick to debunk that rumor, lest his death cause some to believe the Lord made a false prediction: **Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?"**

MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – John 12-21.

ILLUSTRATION: Playing Simon-Says... (Francis Chan video)

Bengel's Gnomes

[John 21:23](#). Ὁ λόγος, *the saying*) See how much more trustworthy is the written letter than a saying. The *saying*, even among the brethren, was

without any fraudulent intention, interpolated: the *hand* (writing) of the apostles, applies the remedy, and the benefit of it is preserved to us even to the present day. The patrons of traditions are themselves at war both with the ancient and new books of Scripture.—*ἀδελφούς, brethren*) viz. those Seven mentioned in [John 21:2](#), and the remaining brethren of that age, or rather those who were living when John wrote. Otherwise there would have been no need to refute the error at so late a period [as when the apostle wrote this Gospel]: the error seems to be confirmed by the fact of the apostle's continuing to live so long. They learned the appellation, *Brethren*, from ch. [John 20:17](#).—*ἐκεῖνος, that* disciple) This pronoun has the effect of amplifying (giving distinction or eminence to one).—*οὐκ ἀποθνήσκει, doth not die*) They substitute this for different words, omitting *ἐάν, ἕως, if—until*, and extending (straining) too much the antithesis between the *following* ('Follow') and the *remaining* ('tarry'). However they recognised the fact, that at the actual coming of the Lord, all mortality shall be abolished. This affords a specimen of the weakness of understanding which remained in the disciples before the coming of the Paraclete; nay more, a specimen of the universal want of dexterity, on the part of men, in understanding the words of Christ, especially those in the Apocalypse, of which there is given in this place a contraction.—*καὶ οὐκ, and not*) John carefully obviates the explanation, as foreign to the purpose and erroneous, lest an utterance should be attributed to Christ, which was not really His. For when John was *dead*, one thing might seem to have been foretold to him by the Lord, and a different thing to have come to pass. In the Divine words, all the points are to be precisely held fast; and we must especially guard against making any addition to them: [Revelation 22:18](#). [For by a very slight change of the words, and such a change as may seem to be of no consequence, the genuine sense may be wrested.—V. g.] Such care did John and the other Evangelists employ in reporting the words of Christ, They have not reported all things in just so many and identically the same words; but yet altogether according to the mind (sentiment) of the Lord, so that they may be and ought to be regarded exactly the same as if they had employed just so many and identically the same words.

Question: "What does the Bible say about communication?"

Answer: The two most important types of communication are between man and God and between human beings.

Communication is more than just our ability to talk, but also to listen. As we communicate with God, the first part of that communication is listening. God's primary ways of communication with us are through His Word ([Romans 10:17](#)) and by the Holy Spirit ([John 14:26](#)). God speaks to all believers through the vehicle of the Bible, which is all we need to equip us for the Christian life ([2 Timothy 3:16](#)). In order to fully understand God's communication with us, we must be diligent to read, study, memorize and meditate on His Word. Trying to shortcut this process by seeking extra-biblical revelations or "hearing" God's voice is not only unscriptural, but opens us up to the deception of our own fallen nature ([Jeremiah 17:9](#); [Proverbs 3:5](#)) or worse, the deception of demons who are always looking for inroads into our minds ([1 Peter 5:8](#)).

The function of the Holy Spirit's communication with us is first to convict us of sin ([John 16:7-11](#)), then to guide us into all truth ([John 16:13](#)). When Jesus went away, His disciples were greatly distressed because they had lost His comforting presence. But He promised to send the Spirit to comfort, console, and guide those who belong to Christ. The Spirit also "bears witness" to our spirits that we belong to Him, and thereby assures us of salvation ([John 14:16](#); [15:26](#); [16:7](#)). The Spirit communicates with the Father on our behalf, interceding and praying for us before the throne, especially when we are weary and downhearted and unable to pray for ourselves ([Romans 8:26](#)).

Our primary mode of communication with God is prayer. We are to go to God in prayer for all our needs. When we lack something, God says that it is not from His inability to provide but from our lack of diligence to ask or asking with the wrong motives ([James 4:2-3](#)). Even Jesus prayed regularly because of the limitations He

took upon Himself in human form ([Luke 3:21](#); [Mark 1:35](#); [Matthew 26:36](#)). No longer able to communicate with God face to face, as He did in heaven, Jesus prayed often and fervently to reestablish intimate communication with the Father. We are to follow His example and “pray continually” ([1 Thessalonians 5:17](#)).

Second, we must examine how we communicate with our fellow man. It goes without saying that no “filthy communication” should escape from the lips of a Christian, whether said in jest or in earnest ([Colossians 3:8](#)). James speaks clearly on this subject in [James 1:19](#), “My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.” When we speak in anger, we fail to show God’s love. Whether speaking to a family member or a stranger, our communication should always come forth in a loving manner. Otherwise, our testimony is damaged, as is the name of Jesus Christ when His people fail to guard their tongues. The best way to be sure what comes from our mouths is pure is to be aware of what is in our hearts. As Jesus reminded the Pharisees, “Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.” If our hearts are filled with ungodliness, it will eventually come forth in our speech, no matter how hard we try to restrain it. Of course, our most important communication to man should be the fulfillment of [Matthew 28:19-20](#) as we communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ to a world that desperately needs to hear it.

Believers should constantly examine their communication. We should consider the tone of newer forms of communication such as email and text messaging. We should never allow the safety of a computer screen to lead us to harsh or ungodly words toward others. We should consider our body language and facial expressions toward others as well. Simply withholding words is meaningless when our body language communicates disdain, anger, or hatred toward another. When engaged in conversation, as we prepare to speak, we should ask ourselves these

questions: it is true ([Exodus 20:16](#))? Is it kind ([Titus 3:2](#))? Is it necessary ([Proverbs 11:22](#))?

Recommended Resources: [Communicating for a Change: Seven Keys to Irresistible Communication by Andy Stanley & Lane Jones](#) and [Logos Bible Software](#).