

## **Everything I Have Said to You [Deeper Sheet 4.26.09]**

Jesus spent most of his time with his disciples. When he wasn't preaching to the masses, healing the sick, or casting out demons, he passed the time explaining everything he was doing, everything that he was, to his disciples. Their task wasn't to simply study and imitate Jesus [though that was a significant part of it]—nor is our task to simply study and imitate Jesus [though that is part of it]. Instead, disciples are meant to let Jesus' way of life sink so deep into their being that, in a sense, they might become him. Following Jesus is about being remade, shaped with a new heart and new mind according to Christ. We are to become what Christ was and is: children of God deeply immersed in and saturated with the love of God.

In John 14 Jesus is describing what it is that he wants to give his disciples. Jesus had a rich inner life marked by generosity, trust, union, intimacy, and connection with God. Each of us has an inner life, somewhere deep down. Maybe we're not even aware that it's there, but it exerts a constant influence over us, guiding and directing how we live. Jesus knew that if his disciples were to have any shot at loving their enemies, trusting God's provision, or being confident in their identity, they'd need to have the same intimate connection with God that he did. The trouble with learning to become more than what we currently are is that at some point we have to reach beyond what we know. We have to take a risk. The training wheels have to come off, because sometimes presence can actually prevent empowerment. Jesus knew that simply explaining his mission to the disciples wouldn't get the job done. To become what Jesus was, they had to carry out Jesus' mission themselves.

But before Jesus left, he saw to it that his disciples were plugged into the same life-giving Spirit of God that he was. He described the Spirit as an advocate, which quite literally means someone who "comes alongside and speaks." The whole thing sounds very mysterious, and in some ways it is. God is a mystery. Yet as Jesus talks about the Spirit, he also keeps stressing the importance of keeping his commands. In the Jewish mindset, commands aren't rules to be kept so we don't enjoy ourselves. Commands are a celebration of the fact that every decision—every thought, every action or inaction—matters.

All of life has meaning—not just the moments when all is well and good, but also the moments of great darkness, fear, and confusion. Jesus' inner life sustained him as he walked headlong into the face of great suffering and uncertainty. Make no mistake; the Spirit isn't a means of escape. The Spirit sustains us along the way, changing our character rather than our circumstances. It makes it possible for the pure and unbound love of God to be planted in us.

Read John 14v15-31

How we respond to our enemies, our worries, and the temptations of proving ourselves and getting defensive reveals a lot about the state of our inner lives. Reflect for a moment on your enemies, worries, and any temptation to prove yourself or get defensive. Based on your reflection, how would you describe your inner life?

In what kinds of situations do you feel the need to prove yourself? What motivates you to prove yourself?

What kinds of things make you defensive?

Why do you think presence [of a teacher, mentor, leader, friend] can sometimes prevent empowerment?

Jesus suggests that by keeping his commands and obeying his teaching we open our inner lives to God's presence within us. What has happened in your life that has increased the love of God in you?

Jesus never ran from or avoided tension or suffering. Rather, he walked into and through it, sustained by the presence of the Spirit. How have you seen the Advocate [Holy Spirit] sustain you in the midst of suffering?

What has caused the pockets of bitterness, cynicism, and fear in your inner life?

What would you hope for from the Advocate [Holy Spirit] to help sustain you in those moments?