

“SO THAT YOU WILL BELIEVE”

JOHN 16:23-33

SUNDAY, 15 FEBRUARY 2009

2ND STREET COMMUNITY CHURCH

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Jesus had a unique relationship of *dependent trust* with His Father. And He calls us into the same kind of relationship of *dependent trust* with Him. But it can be challenging to *love God* and *depend on God* and at the same time keep our *dependence* on the other people in our lives at healthy levels.

God calls us to keep our identity firmly rooted in Jesus Christ, not in ourselves or in what are referred to in Celebrate Recovery as our *habits, hurts, and hang-ups*. But this can only happen as we’re developing a relationship with God that’s based on the belief that God loves us unconditionally, and that God isn’t eternally disappointed in us, or ashamed of us. Jesus Christ and God the Father love one another, and depend on one another unconditionally. And it’s into this relationship of *dependent trust* that Jesus Christ invites His disciples into in **JOHN 16:23-33**.

SOLUS CHRISTUS Latin meaning **CHRIST ALONE**

SOLO CRISTO Latin meaning **BY CHRIST ALONE, FOR CHRIST ALONE, or TO CHRIST ALONE**

Jesus Christ wants the shaping of our identity to **DEPEND ON HIM AND ON HIM ALONE**. Beginning in Germany in 1517, Reformation Christians referred to this relationship of *dependent trust* on Jesus Christ as **SOLUS CHRISTUS** ... which is the belief that you and I will only find what we’re looking for and longing for to make our lives complete, in the person of Jesus Christ. And that only after coming to Jesus Christ in *surrender* and *dependence* will you and I be equipped with the spiritual insight and maturity we need to then begin to allow all the human relationships in our lives to have the *inter-dependency*, not codependency God designed them to have.

Here are just four of the many *The New Testament* verses that call us into this relationship of *fully-surrendered dependent trust* ... into **SOLUS CHRISTUS** ...

FIRST CORINTHIANS 2:2; PHILIPPIANS 1:21 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)

² [The Apostle Paul writes] I decided that while I was with you I would forget about everything except Jesus Christ and His death on the cross.

²¹ To me the only important thing about living is Christ ...

JOHN 5:39; JOHN 14:6 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)

³⁹ [Jesus Christ says] You carefully study the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. They do in fact tell about Me.

⁶ Jesus answered, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. The only way to the Father is through Me.”

Have you learned to *depend* on God in ways that are healthy, wise, and life-giving? Through Jesus' words in **JOHN 16:23-33** He describes and invites us into a life of **SOLUS CHRISTUS**. And as we travel through these eleven verses this morning, God has some timely instruction for us about how to **DEPEND ON HIM FIRST**, and **ON OTHER PEOPLE SECOND**. And then Jesus tells us that when we make the choice to live this way, we'll come to know the *fruit of God's peace*, and *the power of God's courage*.

I don't want you to think that I'm practicing psychology without a license, but I think that a basic understanding of how *codependency* works, and how it undermines a relationship of *dependent trust* on Jesus Christ, will open our hearts and our minds up to some of the truths God has for us this morning.

DEFINITION OF "CODEPENDENCY" ...

Here's how Melody Beattie, in her groundbreaking 1987 book *Codependent No More* describes *codependency* ...

"Codependency is a pattern of detrimental, behavioral interactions within a dysfunctional relationship. A codependent person is one who has let another person's behavior affect him or her, and who is obsessed with controlling that person's behavior."

The *codependent* is usually in an unhealthy relationship with someone who is dealing with issues revolving around alcohol or substance abuse, physical abuse, work addiction, pornography, gambling, food addiction, or other destructive behaviors. And in this tangled web, or again, in what *Celebrate Recovery* calls our "*hurts, habits and hang-ups*", the *codependent* learns to interact in ways **THEY BELIEVE WILL HELP** them navigate successfully through. But of course, they're wrong.

People, who are trapped in *codependent* relationships, usually feel a tremendous guilt, or the need to "fix" others by controlling their actions ... especially the actions of the person or persons who actually own the original problem. And the *codependent's* life often begins spiraling out of control as they try to help that other person change, but not knowing how, they're willing to try anything, do anything, or become anything to make the relationship survive.

DEFINITION OF "ENABLING" ...

It's common for *codependents* to "cover up" the behavior of their loved one; and this is called *enabling*. We *enable* when we allow the behavior of another person to continue on in ways that cause them to avoid the natural consequences of their behavior. In other words, the *dependent* gets a "get out of jail free card", and the *enabling codependent* is the one who gets sentenced to do the jail time. And it's in this soil of *codependency* and *relationship craziness*, where other family members learn to *function* in what we all too commonly refer to as a "*dysfunctional family*." And don't kid yourselves, to some extent or another, we've all *been there and done that*.

Codependents often accept blame for things that are not their fault. For instance, in a *dysfunctional relationship* the *codependent* will often say things like “It’s entirely my fault.” or “They did what they did because of something I did wrong.”

And while this is happening, the person who’s actually the source of the *dysfunction* loves this kind of *codependent* response because they’re always looking for somebody to blame for their choices. And so you have the *dependent* person denying, floundering, and using whatever means of escape the consequences of their actions that they can. And their bag of tricks usually includes threats, coercion, or manipulation to avoid taking responsibility. And the *codependent* in the relationship just keeps getting the short end of the stick over, and over, and over again.

But gang, the good news is that people trapped in these cycles of *codependency* don’t have to keep struggling alone. God hasn’t abandoned us in our troubles. And in fact, God is more than willing and able to come alongside us, and empower us with His Holy Spirit. I’ve seen so many people who are involved in *Celebrate Recovery* gain the tools to healing discipleship they need to move past the bondage of *codependency*, and enter into lives of *dependent trust* with God, and healthy relationships of *interdependence* with other people.

Friends, the only pathway to a truly changed life, is surrender to God’s control, and allowing Him to work out His plans, in His timing. And the only cure for these cycles of *codependence* and *enabling* is to change the **DYNAMICS OF THE PROBLEM, THE BEHAVIORS, AND THE CONSEQUENCES**. And again, this is where God’s WORD and a program of healing discipleship like *Celebrate Recovery* comes into play.

12-STEP SAYING, “LET GO AND LET GOD” ...

You’ve probably heard the recovery saying, “**LET GO AND LET GOD**”. It simply means that once we realize we can’t control others, through prayer, we need to surrender the people and the circumstances in the situation over to God, and then really allow God to work on **THEM**. Oh what joy and peace we find when we stop trying to take control of our lives, and the lives of others ... and surrender it all into God’s hands!

Yes, it can be difficult to let go of learned bad behaviors. I get that. But, in **MATTHEW 19:26** Jesus says, “**With people things are impossible; but with God all things are possible.**” Let’s turn to **JOHN 16**. In **vv. 23-27** Jesus gives His disciples some instruction about prayer and about it will become a central part of the lives of people who are seeking to live in relationships of *dependent trust* with God.

JOHN 16:23-24 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

²³ “In 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.

²⁴ “Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

I can just hear Jesus saying these first words of **v. 23** with such relief. “In just a few days ... after My death and after My resurrection ... you 11 guys aren’t going to

have to ask Me any more questions about the meaning of what I'm going through. And this new understanding that you're going to have will come from My Holy Spirit, Who will, like I told you back in v. 13, 'lead you into all truth.'"

v. 23 ... if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you ... Jesus said this same thing in JOHN 14:7, 16 and I taught through what He was talking about in detail. And now here, later in the same night, we find Jesus once again encouraging His disciples to utilize their privileges in prayer. And He's saying that His followers can count on their prayers being heard and responded to by God when they're in harmony with His name - which is a reference to His character and will.

Let me ask you a question: Do you want to know the fruit of full joy Jesus is talking about here? Then begin, in small, measurable ways to surrender any desire you have to keep control of your own life, or the life of someone you love over to God. Go to God with your prayer requests, and let God be God. I shared these verses with you recently, but we need to come back to them again this morning. Listen to the wisdom of the Apostle Paul and the words he wrote to the Christ-followers living in the town of Philippi around 50 A.D.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7 (THE MESSAGE)

⁶⁻⁷ Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry [*and the desire to try and control your own life and the lives of others*] at the center of your life. [*emphasis added*]

And notice here how Jesus gives His disciples - the ones 2,000 years ago, and you and I as His disciples today - a **POWER** to plug in to. And the **POWER** that He calls us to, is the **POWER** that can change the trauma, and the pain of whatever hard chapter we're going through right now, into joy. Imagine that! And the **POWER** that Jesus calls us to, is **THE POWER OF PRAYER**. And I see a **FAITH LESSON** for us here.

FAITH LESSON ...

Jesus says that in order for this "*Great Exchange*" of our control for His control, and our sorrow for His joy to take place, our prayers must be firmly rooted **FIRST, IN THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST**, and **SECOND, IN CONFORMITY TO THE CHARACTER OF JESUS CHRIST**.

So, **FIRST, WE NEED TO LEARN HOW TO PRAY WITH JESUS CHRIST AS OUR AUTHORITY**. What does this mean?

ILLUSTRATION ... Imagine a woman from Oregon, named Susie Buffett going into a bank in Denver, Colorado to cash an out of state check written to her from her father. She hands the check, and her Oregon ID to the teller who quickly glances at it and says, "I'm sorry but it's against our policy to cash our of state checks. Next."

“Would you please look at the name on the top of the check?” Susie asks the teller. And as she does, the teller’s mouth drops open. “Oh, I’m sorry Ms. Buffett. I didn’t realize *WHOSE ACCOUNT* this check was written on. Of course we can cash this check for you ... I mean, seeing how your father, Warren Buffett is the founder and president of our bank. But then, you knew that didn’t you? Just a moment.”

And friends, likewise, as you and I come to God in prayer, we don’t come saying ...

“God, You saw how many hours I prayed last week. You know I’m caught up on my *YEARLY BIBLE READING PLAN*. You saw how many verses I memorized. And because You’ve seen all of this stuff I’ve done, I’m coming to You with these requests, with a certainty that You’ll hear me and answer my prayers.”

No way. That’s not how it works! When we come to God in prayer, we don’t come on the basis on anything that we’ve done. We simply come on *THE AUTHORITY OF THE NAME THAT WE’VE BEEN GIVEN TO USE*. On the name of *JESUS CHRIST*. And when we come to God in prayer, we don’t use Jesus’ name like a magician saying “Abracadabra!” We simply, and humbly come before God on the authority of the Name we’ve been given to use ... the Name of *JESUS CHRIST*. And we say ...

“God, it’s me again. I know that I can’t fix or control anything. But I know that You can. I’ve given control of my life over to Your Son Jesus Christ, and He’s teaching me a whole new way to be human. Lately He’s been turning my sorrows into joy, and His joy is becoming my strength. I’ve been giving Him my anxieties, my worries, and my fears, and He’s been shaping them into prayers. And so knowing that Jesus is with You in heaven, and that He’s my intercessor, it’s by His *AUTHORITY* that I come to You today with these prayers. Thank You God, for knowing me, for loving me, and for hearing me.”

So *FIRST, WE NEED TO LEARN HOW TO PRAY WITH JESUS CHRIST AS OUR AUTHORITY* ... but *SECOND*, our prayers to God need to be *IN CONFORMITY TO THE CHARACTER OF JESUS CHRIST*. What does this mean? Well imagine this ...

ILLUSTRATION ... Imagine Susie Buffet going into that same bank with a gun and saying to the teller, “I’m Warren Buffet’s daughter. Fill this bag up with money, or get ready to go to the big Bank Vault in the sky!” If Susie did that, the teller might start cramming money into the bag, but she’d also push the silent alarm button. Why? Because Susie *WOULDN’T BE ACTING IN CONFORMITY TO THE CHARACTER OF THE PERSON WHOSE NAME SHE WAS USING*.

Gang, this is precisely why it’s so important that you and I study the life, and the ministry, and the words of Jesus Christ. Because it’s only as we get to know His *THOUGHTS*, hear His *WORDS*, and see His *ACTIONS*, that they can become our *THOUGHTS*, our *WORDS*, and our *ACTIONS*. Because when we pray for things that aren’t in conformity to the character and the nature of God’s Son and our Savior Jesus Christ, we can’t expect God to respond to them. Do you see it? Do you see it?

And this is how we learn to pray without ceasing (cf., FIRST THESSALONIANS 5:17) ... and to praying the kind of knocking prayer Jesus told His disciples about in MATTHEW 7:7-11. I taught extensively on this on 14 December 2008, from JOHN 14:25-31 ... and if you'd like to know more about it, I'd encourage you to get it on CD, or download the notes. Because I may have heard more feedback from people about the practical help of that teaching than any I've ever given before.

OUR NEW WEBSITE AT: www.2ndstreet.org

SIDELIGHT: Our new website will launch this week. All the teachings from 2nd Street over the past 2.5 years will be there for you to listen to on your computer, or to download ... including .pdf teaching notes for nearly all of them as well. Much thanks to James Stephens who has helped put together our new website. It's going to be a great resource for us, as well as a good place for people who aren't yet 2nd Street attendees to see who we are and what's going on here.

But back to what Jesus is saying to us in JOHN 16:23-24 ...

OUR PRAYERS MUST BE FIRMLY ROOTED ...

- **FIRST, IN THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST, AND**
- **SECOND, IN CONFORMITY TO THE CHARACTER OF JESUS CHRIST.**

JOHN 16:25 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

²⁵ “These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father.

v. 25 ... These things I have spoken to you in figurative language ... During the past three years of Jesus' life and ministry on the earth, much of what He's taught had been with the use of **PARABLES**, **ALLEGORIES**, and **PROVERBS**. But after Jesus' resurrection much of that methodology would be replaced by clear spiritual truths that would be readily understood by spiritually-minded, Holy Spirit filled disciples. Here's some of what the Apostle Paul writes about this in FIRST CORINTHIANS 2 ...

FIRST CORINTHIANS 2 (CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH VERSION)

Friends, when I came and told you the mystery that God had shared with us, I didn't use big words or try to sound wise. In fact, while I was with you, I made up my mind to speak only about Jesus Christ, who had been nailed to a cross ... I simply let God's Spirit show His power. That way you would have faith because of God's power and not because of human wisdom.

God's Spirit has shown you everything. His Spirit finds out everything, even what is deep in the mind of God. You are the only one who knows what is in your own mind, and God's Spirit is the only one who knows what is in God's mind. But God has given us His Spirit.

That's why we don't think the same way that the people of this world think. That's also why we can recognize the blessings that God has given us.

Do you see God's plans for us here in Paul's words? The relationship of intimacy and *dependent trust* that Jesus had with God the Father and with the Holy Spirit, He invites us into. And it's only out of this place of **BALANCED, DEPENDENT TRUST** that we can begin to surrender our own lives and our desires to control our own lives over to God moment-by-moment each day ... and it's only out of this place of **BALANCED, DEPENDENT TRUST** that we can then also begin to surrender to God our need to control the lives of other people, and our need to depend on other people in ways that are unhealthy and enabling.

v. 25 ... **an hour is coming** ... this phrase refers to the time following Jesus' resurrection, but before He'd return to heaven, when He'd appear to His disciples and teach them more specifically about the deeper meaning of all that He'd said and done. And I see another **FAITH LESSON** for us here.

FAITH LESSON ...

Gang, if we want to go to deeper places of *knowledge, understanding, and wisdom* in our relationship with Jesus Christ, we have to **SPEND MORE TIME WITH HIM**. *Before, during, and after* we go through difficult chapters of life, we need to remain at Jesus' side - not pushing Him aside - but staying rooted in Him.

Because it's when we go through hard times that we discover **WHO** and **WHAT** we're primarily depending on ... on ourselves, on others, or on God.

JOHN 16:26-27 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

²⁶ "In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf;
²⁷ for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father.

I love how Jesus goes on to say in vv. 26-27 that God the Father loves you and me. He just lays it out here and makes it clear that as the Son of God, He isn't persuading an angry Father to be gracious to us. No way. Rather, Jesus is saying that His life, His ministry, and His upcoming death and resurrection will provide the rock-solid basis for God's continued love, compassion, forgiveness, and graciousness towards us.

Friends, did you know that you've **NEVER** already done anything, and you can **NEVER** do anything, that will make God love you **MORE** than He already does? And did you know that you've **NEVER** already done anything, and you can **NEVER** do anything, that that will make God love you **LESS** than He already does? God loves us. It's a done deal. He's crazy about us. And just like Jesus Christ is in a relationship of *dependent trust* with God the Father, He invites you and me into a relationship of *dependent trust* with God. And we can only come into this relationship of *dependent*

trust as we understand that God will never love us more or less than He already does - because right now He loves us completely and unconditionally.

ILLUSTRATION ... 2nd Streeter Trisha Wilson has learned a lot about God's plan for us to be in a relationship of *dependent trust* with Him, and how to say "goodbye" to *unhealthy, codependent* relationships in our lives. And so I've invited her to share with us on the following three questions ...

1. What did *codependency* look like in your life?
2. How has God helped you come to this place of *dependent trust* with Him in your life?
3. How has moving past unhealthy *codependency* on other people and *dependent trust* on God made a difference in your life?

v. 27 ... the Father Himself loves you ... The word Jesus uses for loves here is **phileo**, and not **agape**. **phileo** is a Greek word for love that can sound kind of cheap, compared to **agape**. But in reality, **phileo** speaks of **warmth, emotions, and affection**. In **JOHN 11:36** it was used to describe how Jesus loved Lazarus like a brother. And in **JOHN 5:20** Jesus used it to describe the love God the Father has for Him, as His Son. I love how *The Old Testament* Prophet Jeremiah writes about this ...

JEREMIAH 31:3 (NEW LIVING TRANSLATION)

³ "I have loved you, My people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to Myself."

JOHN 16:28-32 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

²⁸⁻²⁹ "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father."

²⁹ His disciples said, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech.

³⁰ "Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God."

³¹ Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe?"

³² "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.

The disciples think they've finally figured out what Jesus is saying ... **v. 30** ... "Oh, **NOW** we understand. **NOW** we believe!" But Jesus responds to them and says in **v. 31**, "**DO** you now believe?" Because He knows that in just a little while ... in fact, later on in this same night, that they'll all fall asleep while He's praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. And He knows that after He's arrested, most of His disciples will be scattered away from Him like sheep running away from their shepherd after being spooked by an unfamiliar sound in the night. And that's what we do, right?

I can relate to the disciples' words in v. 32, because while it seems clear that they don't have a ***complete understanding*** of what's going on, their love for Jesus Christ is solid and they're trying with all their hearts to stay in a relationship of *dependent trust* with Him. Here's a song by Andy Park that really illustrates what Jesus is talking about, as He invites us to move deeper into a healthy relationship of *dependent trust* with God. It's called "Yet, I Will Praise."

SOLO ... "YET I WILL PRAISE" | PROJECT THE LYRICS AT THE END

JOHN 16:33 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

³³ "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."

Gang, isn't this awesome news! That in the midst of the suffering and the hardship life throws at us, that when we make the choice to stay in a relationship of *dependent trust* with Jesus Christ, we can have this kind of "peace"? It's amazing!

And Jesus tells His friends here that even though they'll run away from Him for a while, that He's going to keep on loving them, and that He'll never forsake them. And the same thing is true for you and for me. Maybe you've been running away from God. Maybe you've been putting your trust in people, or in your own abilities instead of relying on Jesus Christ. Maybe you've fallen into traps of *codependency* and *enabling* with other people instead of taking Jesus up on His invitation to *surrender control* of your own life and your desire to control the lives of others over to Him.

But no matter where we find ourselves this morning on this continuum of *codependency* or *dependent trust*, Jesus Christ isn't promising us smooth sailing ... He's promising us His **peace**.

So let's not be afraid of this world and of it's ups and downs. **Jesus Christ has overcome the world**. And by learning to *depend* on Him, and by making the choice to invite Him to ***shape our worries and our fears into prayers*** ... prayers that are in conformity to the character of Jesus Christ, you and I can have the power, through God's Holy Spirit to participate with God in the **overcoming** life.

FIRST JOHN 5:4-5 (NEW LIVING TRANSLATION)

⁴⁻⁵ For every child of God defeats this evil world by trusting Christ to give the victory. And the ones who win this battle against the world are the ones who believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

NEXT SUNDAY ... CARDBOARD TESTIMONIES

Invite you friends who don't have a church home to join you and witness first-hand the *beauty* and the *power* of being in relationship with the God of the universe ... Who is in the business of putting back together the broken pieces of people's lives. It's going to be an exciting service of *testimony*, *praise*, and *celebration*!