

Sermon Study Notes – Key Points, Questions & Application

Sermon – Because I Live

Sermon 1 in the New Series – “Words to Live By”

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Key Scripture:

John 14:15–24

Big Idea

Because Jesus is alive, his words are not optional advice or admirable wisdom – they define reality. Obedience to Jesus is not about performing to earn his love; it is the natural expression of a relationship with the living Lord. Through love expressed in obedience, we experience his presence – and begin to live differently, now.

Series Introduction: “Words to Live By”

This new series launches from Easter and presses the question: **What difference does the resurrection actually make in our everyday lives?** It is entirely possible to believe that Jesus rose from the dead and yet live as though that reality has very little practical impact. This series calls us to move from Jesus’ words as abstract theory to Jesus’ words as the center of how we think, decide, and respond.

Christian Year Context for Worship & Spiritual Formation

Post-Easter / Eastertide – We have just celebrated the resurrection. The question this series presses is: now what? Joy and celebration are right – but life resumes, the same pressures return, the same fears and anxieties. The resurrection must move from a seasonal feeling to a daily foundation.

The Opening Question: What Difference Does It Make?

Two stories that reframe the question:

- **Skiing without preparation:** Going in without research because “it’s in my blood” – it made a big difference. A little preparation changes everything.
- **A bump in a Cornell hallway (1989):** A seemingly insignificant moment – a stranger bumping into someone – turned out to be how two people met and started a family. Small things make a big difference.

The resurrection is not a small thing. And yet many of us treat its implications the way Seth treated the skiing advice – assuming it won't really matter much to how we actually live.

Love and Obedience: Reframing the Connection

John 14:15 – “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

This can sound like pressure – *prove your love, perform, get it right*. But that is not what Jesus is doing.

- **Jesus is not describing a condition for earning his love.** He is describing the nature of a relationship with him.
- **In every meaningful relationship, love expresses itself in response.** If you truly trust someone, you listen to them. If you truly value someone, their words carry weight.
- **Love for Jesus is not merely emotional – it is responsive and directional.** It takes shape in how you live.
- **This reframes obedience:** Obedience is no longer about obligation to a higher authority. It is about alignment. It is what it looks like when someone begins to take Jesus's words seriously.

This theme of obedience is not a side comment – it is **the controlling idea of the passage**, repeated in verses 15, 21, 23, and 24.

When Jesus says “my commandments,” he is not just referring to isolated rules. He is talking about everything he has revealed: his teachings, his words, his whole message from the Father, his very life as a proclamation of the gospel. And the center of all of it is John 13:34 – **“Love one another as I have loved you.”**

Both Together: Community and Personal Responsibility

Jesus speaks to a group – but also calls each person directly.

- **Obedience to Jesus is not just private.** It takes shape together in community – in how we love, bear with, encourage, forgive, and stay committed to one another. This is not a solo project.
- **But you cannot ride on someone else's faith.** You cannot outsource your relationship with Jesus to a group, a church, or a friend. The Lord calls you directly into relationship with him.
- **Both are true simultaneously:** We need our brothers and sisters helping us follow Jesus. And we are also personally responsible to respond to him.

Why Should Jesus' Words Carry Weight? Because He Is Alive.

We live in a world of endless calls – endless voices competing for our attention, our trust, our obedience. So why should Jesus's words be the ones that shape our lives?

The answer is John 14:19: **“Because I live, you also will live.”**

- Without the resurrection, Jesus's words are admirable – perhaps a helpful self-help book. But they are not ultimately binding.
- If he has risen from the dead, if Jesus is alive today, then we are not dealing with a simple teacher. We are dealing with **the one who has authority over life and death.**
- That means his words are not suggestions to help us live better. **His words define reality.** They tell us not just how to live better, but what life actually is.

You Are Not Left Alone: The Gift of the Holy Spirit

If Jesus' standard is this high, how can anyone actually live it?

- **John 14:16–17:** “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, even the Spirit of truth. I will not leave you as orphans.”
- Jesus is not simply giving directional commands and walking away. He is giving himself – his Spirit – and through the Holy Spirit, his presence remains with his people.
- The Christian life is not a matter of **trying harder** to follow external instructions. It is a matter of being **internally transformed** by his presence.
- The difference: someone handing you a map and saying “get there” versus someone walking with you, guiding you to your destination.

Life Now, Not Just Later

“Because I live, you also will live” – this is not only a promise about eternity. In John's gospel, life begins now.

- **A life no longer controlled by fear** – because death is no longer ultimate.
- **A life no longer defined by performance** – because acceptance is no longer something to be earned but something given.
- **A life no longer defined by isolation** – because you are no longer alone and never will be.

Because he lives now, you can begin to live differently, now. Not perfectly. But faithfully.

Obedience Creates Space for Awareness of His Presence

John 14:23 – “We will come to him and make our home with him.”

- Jesus is not just talking about obedience in general. He is talking about **lived experience** – a kind of personal, relational knowing of him that comes through obedience.
- Not because obedience earns his love – that would contradict everything Jesus has taught. But because **obedience creates space for awareness**.
- In any relationship, closeness is not only about status. You can be in a defined relationship and yet feel distant because attentiveness is lacking. One person is calling and the other isn't picking up.
- One of the primary ways our experience of Jesus deepens is through a willing, responsible, faithful posture that says: **if you say it, Jesus, then I trust that it's life**.
- **“Make our home with him”** – this is not transactional language. It is relational. It echoes the deepest longings many of us carry: to not be alone, to not be unseen, to not be left to carry our lives by ourselves.

Personal Application

Take one command of Jesus and order your life around it – in a small way or a big way.

Start with the command Jesus gave that same night: **“Love one another as I have loved you.”** (John 13:34)

- **Don't just reflect on it – act on it.** Identify one specific person or relationship and love them in a concrete, Christlike way this week.
- **Pay attention to the resistance.** Where do you feel pushback? Where do old habits or fears pull against it? That resistance is a diagnostic – it reveals what is actually shaping your life.
- **Pay attention to what changes.** Where do you begin to experience something different? When we take Jesus's words seriously, they begin to move from theory to life.
- **Ask the question honestly:** What authority do Jesus's words actually have in my life when they challenge my instincts, confront my habits, and call me somewhere uncomfortable?
- **Remember you are not alone.** You are accompanied by the Spirit of the living God. You are not generating this life from within yourself. You are being helped.

Discussion Questions

1. **Seth opened with the question: “What difference does it make?”** Honestly: what practical difference does the resurrection make in how you actually live day to day – not what you believe on paper, but how you make decisions, handle relationships, and respond to difficulty?
2. **Jesus says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” – not as a condition to earn his love, but as a description of what love looks like in a relationship.** Where in your life is your love for Jesus most visibly expressed? Where is it most lacking?
3. **The sermon described “functional authorities” – the things that really shape our decisions, even if we say Jesus does.** What are the functional authorities in your life right now – feelings, fears, others’ expectations, past history? How do they compete with Jesus’s words?
4. **Jesus says obedience creates space for awareness of his presence – not earning his love, but opening us to experience it more deeply.** Have you experienced that connection? What happened when you took a hard step of obedience? What happened when you avoided one?
5. **The new command at the center of this passage is: “Love one another as I have loved you.”** Who is one person in your life – in your family, your church, your neighborhood – to whom you could express that kind of love this week? What would it look like concretely?