

LIVING
IT OUT



**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Never Alone - Letters in Red

March 8, 2021

Matthew 28:20b

And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Before I was a full-time mom, I worked as a nurse. When I first began my job, I quickly discovered that no school can teach you everything you need to know before entering the real world of bedside nursing. Much of it is learned on the job—how to think critically, how to help patients and families through bad news, how to deal with difficult and violent people, and how to thicken your skin against harsh words from stressed-out physicians. Lucky for me, I had an amazing mentor during my orientation. She was by my side for almost everything. She was both a cushion to fall back on and someone who pushed me to grow and learn by doing challenging things.

The Holy Spirit is a bit like a good orienter/trainer. He gives us the words we're lacking, helps us function when we're too freaked out to act, helps us understand what we're being taught, and is a constant comrade, guiding and supporting us. When Jesus ascended into heaven, he didn't leave his followers empty-handed. The disciples made it through their "orientation period," but Jesus gifted them, and us, with the Holy Spirit in his stead as a constant companion. You are not alone.

John 14:15-17a

¹⁵ "If you love me, obey my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. ¹⁷ He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth."

So how do we experience his presence? First, you need to know God in his fullness. That is, God the Father (**provider**), God the Son (**personal**), and God the Holy Spirit (**presence**). Next, you need to understand the Holy Spirit's role as your comforter, guide, and advocate. He will never leave you. Last, you need to fill yourself with the Holy Spirit. As Lead Pastor Ben Snyder said in his weekend message, "allow the Holy Spirit to soak you." Give him access to all of your heart, because through his Holy Spirit, God is always with you. You'll have his promptings, his guidance, his teachings, and his words. Call on the Holy Spirit,

welcome him into your life, and you will have the presence of God with you at all times.

Matthew 28:19-20 NIV

¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and 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."

Questions:

What is your experience with the Holy Spirit? Are you very close and in tune with his guidance, or are you hesitant and maybe a little skeptical? If you're skeptical, what would it take for you to open yourself up a bit more to the Holy Spirit?

Next Steps:

When I read the *letters in red* (Jesus' words in the Bible), I not only look to understand the lesson he is teaching but also seek to understand Jesus' heart and who he is. Next time you're reading the red words, ask yourself: "What does this tell me about Jesus?" "How does he think?" "How does he teach?" "How does he show love to others?" "Why is he talking to this person this way?" This will train you to better know Jesus' voice and recognize when the Holy Spirit is speaking into your life.

Prayer:

Dear God, you are so complex. It is so hard for me to fully understand you in your fullness. As I try to understand, help me to open my heart to your Holy Spirit so that I will have your guidance all day, every day. Sometimes the world can make me feel isolated, especially during difficult times, but I know you are always with me. Thank you for never abandoning me. Help me to remember that I am never alone. Amen.

This post was written by Ashlee Grosjean, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.

Did I Hear Him Right? - Letters in Red

March 9, 2021

I enjoyed the visual that was painted for us this weekend. In the book of Matthew 28:20, we read that Jesus shared these words with his disciples, “I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Then soon after, he left them as he ascended into heaven.

Imagine what they must have been thinking: “Did I hear him right?” “Didn’t he just say ...?” “Okay, Jesus. Funny, come on back now.” We get a glimpse of what this looked like in the book of Acts which captures the steps of the early Christians after Jesus’ departure from them.

Acts 1:9-11

⁹ After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. ¹⁰ As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. ¹¹ “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!”

When I think of this story, I can’t help but think of National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation when Cousin Eddie arrives out of nowhere and joins the Griswald family as they are admiring Clark’s Christmas lights. In this case, two angels appear out of nowhere and join the disciples as they’re looking into the sky. I imagine them all standing around gazing upward for a while before the angels speak and bring the disciples’ attention back to earth.

As they snapped back to reality, they were reminded to focus on the words Jesus left with them.

Matthew 28:19-20

¹⁹ “Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

As Lead Pastor Ben Snyder pointed out, these words clarified their purpose and reminded them of his presence. First, their purpose was given when Jesus told them to go and make disciples, to baptize them, and to teach them to obey his commandments.

Those words of purpose given to the disciples are also for us—they clarify our purpose as individuals and as a church, today. Here at CedarCreek, we say it this way, “We exist to introduce people to Jesus and the life-changing adventure he has for them.” This journey includes knowing God, finding freedom, discovering purpose, and making an eternal difference.

Additionally, Jesus promised his continual presence. But how was that promise kept if Jesus immediately left them? Ben shared that the answer to this is found in understanding the trinity. There is one God, but God is 3 in 1—Father, Son, and Spirit. The Spirit was sent soon after Jesus went back to heaven.

John 14:16-17

¹⁶ “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. ¹⁷ He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.”

The Spirit is always with us and lives in us. He is our advocate, and without him, it would be impossible to live out our purpose. For us to experience God, and accomplish all he has set out for us to do, it is essential for us to live full of the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18-19

¹⁸ Don’t be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, ¹⁹ singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts.

To be filled with the Spirit, we need to let the Spirit control our lives. This begins when we are aware of him. Ben reminded us this week, “We don’t have to ask God to be with us. He already is.” When we live from this truth, we live our lives differently. Willing and available to live out his purpose for us.

Questions:

Read John [14:16-17](#), [26](#) and [Acts 1:8](#). What role does the Holy Spirit play in the life of a Christian?

In what ways do you experience his presence in your life?

How would your life be different if you lived it believing and remembering God is always with you and will help you in every circumstance?

NextSteps:

Read [Matthew 28:19-20](#) and [John 14:16-17](#), and write the verses down on a 3 x 5 card. Keep it with you and allow it to remind you of the truth that God is with you wherever you go.

Prayer:

Dear heavenly Father, thank you for your Spirit that is in me. Thank you for always being with me and being my advocate who teaches and reminds me of the truth. Today, my prayer is not for you to be with me, because I know you already are. Instead, help me remember and live my life with that truth at the forefront of my mind. In Jesus' name. Amen.

WE, Not Me - Letters in Red

March 10, 2021

Matthew 28:20b

“And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Bottom Line: If God is always with you, then you are never alone.

I knew that! I think I've always had some knowledge of that verse. I'm just not sure I fully believed it. Know what I mean?

I believed in God. I believed he was omnipotent (all-powerful), omniscient (all-knowing), and especially omnipresent (all-present). However, I'm not sure I fully allowed this knowledge to influence my daily life. It wasn't baked into my DNA or motivating my decision making every day. I wasn't seeing the world through the lens of this knowledge.

Thankfully, that all changed a few years ago. For simplicity sake, let's just say anything that could go wrong did—life, kids, marriage, work, and friends. Everything turned sideways in a very short amount of time. Now, I don't know about you, but when life starts piling on, I tend to isolate myself—emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and physically. I put myself on an island and rely on nothing and nobody, at least initially.

I'm not saying that's the healthy approach. It was just my instinctive reaction to too much life! Things didn't really start to turn around until I came to the realization that I wasn't alone in this battle. It seems so simple! You'll have to trust me on this, the solution to my problems was not only simple but also completely revolutionized my prayer life forever.

“WE”

My friends, that's it. One simple word changed how I see God, my relationship with God, and my walk upon this earth with God.

As I was doing a prayer walk one day, I remember joking, “Well God, WE have some work to do.” At that moment, everything changed for me. I wasn't alone. I invited God into my storm. I had a friend, and father, who was going to do this with me—every step of the way. It's so subtle, but that simple word made it “God and I” and not just “me.” I stopped making everything about me and invited God

to be an active part in the *we*. It's what God wants, and it's what he promises to do.

Questions:

What struggles do you have today? How can Jesus help you through them?

How has Jesus helped you through difficult seasons?

Next Steps:

Journal. Not only will journaling help you in your prayer life, it will be a great record of how you and God got through various storms together.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, help me to see that we are in this together. I am not alone. I have a God who loves me and knows me better than I know myself. What an amazing relationship to be in! Thank you for your love, God. Thank you for your patience. May I continue to honor you by growing my knowledge of you and my willingness to make you a more active participant in my life. Amen.

In the Company of the Spirit - Letters in Red

March 11, 2021

Truth be told, I became far too accustomed to death during my younger years. Saying “goodbye” seemed more common than “hello,” so getting too close to people didn’t interest me. At least I thought it didn’t.

The more I grew in my faith, the more I learned to seek an essential connection to people. So when death came calling again, I felt my strength leave my body. I knew those closest to me weren't ready to say goodbye to their loved one the way I had done many times before. As I thought about what was ahead, fear ripped the courage from my heart, and the stoic demeanor I usually displayed crumbled to the floor of my kitchen. No person was there to witness the moment, but I wasn't alone.

Matthew 28:20b

“And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

That moment was too big for me to handle on my own, but God's Spirit filled the room and turned my need for help to hope. God gave me the necessary strength to drive ten hours to support my wife and others, as we all suffered through such a terrible loss and mourned together.

Because of that experience, now when I pray for strength in times of uncertainty, I go to one of my favorite verses.

Joshua 1:9

“This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord, your God is with you wherever you go.”

Thinking back to that moment when I sank to my kitchen floor, I’m reminded of a story (thanks to Findlay Campus Pastor Chris Baney) that Rob Pelinka shared about Denzel Washington. When asked how he prepared for a particular role, Denzel shared that, [before he went to bed at night, he would take his shoes and put them deep underneath his bed. The next morning, this made him start every day on his knees, in humility and prayer.](#)

I wonder if the Spirit moved me to my knees that day to remind me of my need for him and that he was there with me, ready to help me through it.

Questions:

Do you lean on God in moments of uncertainty? How are you reminded of Jesus' words during troubled seasons?

Next Steps:

Remember that you are not alone. Pray for the right answers to your problems. Be more intentional when studying the Bible. Don't be afraid to seek guidance from others when trying to dissect Jesus' words.

Prayer:

Father God, thank you for not leaving me, even when I think I'm alone. Let me hear and see your truth in my weakest moments. Remind me that strength as well as answers are found in prayer, so humble me. Break me down to my knees and continue to fill my heart with your love. Amen.

Thanks for the Words - Letters in Red

March 12, 2021

Proverbs 28:26

Those who trust their own insight are foolish, but anyone who walks in wisdom is safe.

In our previous series, we talked a lot about how powerful words are—and how we need to choose and use them carefully. Sometimes the things we *think* are true and need to be said, simply aren't and don't.

As a writer, there are words I've written to others that would have been better off left unsaid. Why? Because I was trusting my own judgment and opinion, believing I knew what was best for them, that they needed to hear what I had to say. That's prideful, arrogant, and dangerous and has damaged some of my relationships in ways I wish I could take back.

On the other hand, there have been times when I *didn't* speak up. I simply lacked confidence in my words, even though I knew what was on my heart to say was true and could have benefited those who would hear it ([Ephesians 4:29](#)). Choosing to stay silent in those situations also proved damaging.

It kind of sounds like there's no winning, but there's a big difference between those two situations—*where* I placed my trust.

Matthew 28:20b

“And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

For anyone who has accepted Jesus as their Savior, God is with us always in the form of the Holy Spirit—and sometimes he speaks through us—if we let him. When we don't trust what he has to say, we are withholding good from those around us.

So how do you tell the difference between words from your own judgment and words from the Holy Spirit? First, stop and consider them *before* you say them. Words that fly quickly are often the ones we regret the most. Next, consider the source—where are these words coming from? Are they rooted in something you can trust, like Scripture or the advice of a wise fellow Christian, or more likely,

are they just something you **feel** is true? Even if you feel strongly about it, that doesn't make it true. Ask yourself if the Bible and Jesus' teaching support your feelings. Last, run it by the [Ephesians 4:29](#) test: Is it good? Is it helpful? Will it benefit and encourage those who hear it?

If your source is trustworthy, the Bible supports it, and the words will be good, helpful, and encouraging to those who hear them (even if the message may be tough to hear)—have the courage to speak. Sometimes the Holy Spirit says difficult things through Christians who deliver his message with grace and compassion.

If you've accepted Christ into your life, God is with you, and he wants to speak through you.

Questions:

Do you tend to struggle more with speaking your mind when you shouldn't or not speaking up when you should? (Remember, we all do both at times.)

Can you think of a time when the Holy Spirit spoke through you? How did it feel? What were the results?

Next Steps:

To speak words that are good and wise, we must make sure we're filled with the good and wise words of God. You can achieve this by watching a Bible-based, life-giving message every week (online or better still at church); reading your Bible daily (I recommend reading a Proverb a day on top of your usual devotional); joining a Group to develop authentic Christ-centered friendships where people can speak truth into your life (and you into theirs); or asking a wise, trusted Christian to be your mentor.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for being present always. Thank you for the way you strengthen and carry me through challenges, taking what the enemy intends to hurt me with and, instead, using it to help me grow closer to you. Thank you for the times you've spoken through me. Give me the humility to hold my tongue when I'm tempted to speak out of my own foolish pride and sin nature, and give me the confidence in you that I need in order to speak out when the Holy Spirit

prompts me. Help me to know the difference. May your will be done in me and through me. Amen.

This post was written by Payton Lechner, a regular contributor and editor of the LivingItOut.