

## **A Back-To-School Talk from Jesus**

By Barry Shafer

### **The Backdrop**

If you've ever leafed through the Gospel of John in a red-letter edition of the Bible (where the words of Jesus appear in red text), you've probably noticed a section that is a sea of red. This collection of red is Jesus' last, intimate gathering with His disciples, so you could actually call this Jesus' farewell address.

You could also call this Jesus' back-to-school talk, and here's why: Jesus was prepping His disciples to live the gospel in a world that's simply not conducive to the gospel message. Sound familiar?

### **The What**

Picture yourself having a one-on-one with Jesus. Maybe you're meeting at your favorite coffee spot such as Starbucks, your favorite ice cream place, or your favorite place of solitude such as woods, park or beach. The verses below are snippets from Jesus' farewell address to His disciples. As you read these verses, imagine Jesus sharing these words with you face-to-face. Picture what Jesus would be wearing and whether He would be drinking a fancy coffee drink or a basic roast. You may want to print out these passages, and to help you acknowledge what Jesus is saying to you (as if you're nodding in agreement or taking notes on what Jesus is saying while He's talking to you), underline anything that gives you encouragement or comfort.

“If you keep My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete” (John 15:10-11).

“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything I learned from my Father I have made known to you” (John 15:13-15).

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you” (John 15:18-19).

“I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

(Jesus praying to the Father for His disciples—and you!)

“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so they may have the full measure of My joy within them. I have given them Your Word, and the

world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that You take them out of the world, but that You protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify Myself, that they too may be truly sanctified” (John 17:13-19).

### **The So What**

Take a few moments to reflect on the things you found that give you encouragement or comfort in these passages. Ask Jesus to show you practical ways these things can help you navigate the challenges of a school year. You may even want to make a Top 10 list, such as: “Top 10 Encouragements for This School Year!” You’ll find some prompts below for processing and praying through each passage, but be sure to first process these verses with Jesus!

How can deep, complete joy help you navigate the emotional peaks and valleys of a school year? (John 15:10-11)

Friendships sometimes have a way of changing. This can be stressful and even lead to disappointment. What does it mean to you that Jesus has called you His friend? (John 15:13-15)

If the world hates you (ridicules you, pokes fun at you, looks down on you), you’re in good company. Jesus has been there. What strength can you draw from sharing this common experience with Jesus? (John 15:18-19)

This statement from Jesus is an emotional whipsaw. It starts off bad and immediately gets good. Take a minute to apply this verse to your school year. Write a prayer to God that reflects gratitude for the fact that even though life in this world can get hard Jesus has overcome this hard world. It’s like being lost in a maze and suddenly bumping into the designer of the maze. (John 16:33)

Isn’t it kinda cool that Jesus is praying for **you**?! How does Jesus’ prayer encourage or motivate you? (John 17:13-19)

### **Wrapping It Up**

You probably can tell Jesus does not want us to feel as if we’re living in this world alone. He is with us. No matter how bad it gets, He is with us.

**Final thought:** This devo gives you insight to Jesus’ farewell address to His disciples. For full impact, carve out time in the next couple days to experience all of John 13—17.