



September 3, 2023

“Progressive Christianity?”

SS 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.

News:

★ **Wednesday at Alêtheia starts September 20** ★

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

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Emails: pastor@myaletheia.com, stacey.sundt@myaletheia.com

JOHN 16:12–15 ~

Jesus said, “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them at the present time.” It’s certainly the case that we humans are easily overloaded, especially when we are stressed.

Jesus in introducing the problem confirmed that He had already told them everything, they were just not ready for it and still weren’t.

There is not a single thing here that would imply that the Holy Spirit was going to share some new information, some new revelation, some new insight, some new Truth.

Jesus is the Truth, as He declared using the covenantal name of God, “I AM the Truth.” John 1:18 says, “No one has seen God at any time; God the only Son, who is in the arms of the Father, He has explained Him.

If you allow that the Holy Spirit had something to teach Christians beyond what Jesus had already taught, then you have opened yourself to the doctrine of progressive revelation, and so, Progressive Christianity. To say that less misleadingly, changing, shifting, and unsettled Christianity.

A changeable Christianity comes in different flavors and in different modes. One such way is the belief that the grand poohbah mediates new Truth.

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

Another way, and a way of greater concern for us... is the belief that the Holy Spirit can show individual Christians new Truth. That is the opposite of the unity of the Holy Spirit. No wonder we cannot get along. We all have our opinions, and we think that they come from the "Burning Bush."

Is God just as unstable, just as flakey, and just as unreliable as a human being?

God unfolded a progressive revelation of Himself over human history culminating in Jesus. His progressive revelation finished in Jesus (Hebrews 1:1-3).

Jesus repeatedly said that He was not teaching anything of His Own, but that everything was the Truth from the Heavenly Father. Here in verse 13, He said that the Holy Spirit, likewise, would teach nothing of His Own, but would only disclose whatever He hears. Okay from Whom does the Holy Spirit hear?

Verse 14, literally says, "That one (meaning the Holy Spirit of Truth) will bring glory to Me because from Me He will receive and deliver to you." The Holy Spirit will glorify Jesus, because He will never add His Own thing because that would diminish Jesus and bring glory to Himself.

The end of verse 13, "He will disclose to you what is to come." Many people will dismiss everything I just said and go back and hold onto that small phrase to advance a doctrine of progressive revelation.

First, we must remember who Jesus was talking to - it was to the 11 remaining Apostles.

Contextually, it is not His death, resurrection, and ascension, it is the purpose of all of that.

Ultimately, in context, it was the Holy Spirit enabling His original disciples to do what Jesus wanted them to do.

That was to love Him enough to obey Him resulting in a practical, physical, self-sacrificial love for the church just as He commanded. That church, unified by the Holy Spirit in love, convicts the world of its sin, of its false righteousness, and of its well-earned and inevitable judgment.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____



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the gospel of
JOHN

ΕΝΑΡΧΗ Η ΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΛΟΓΟΣ ΗΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΗΝ
ΘΗ ΚΑΙ ΘΕ ΤΗ ΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΣΤΟΣ ΗΝ ΕΝΑΡΧΗ ΤΙΡΟΣ
ΤΟΝ ΘΗ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΔΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΕΓΕΝΕΤΟ ΚΑΙ ΧΩΡΙΣ



John 16:12–15, 12“I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them at the present time. 13But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. 14He will glorify Me, for He will take from Mine and will disclose it to you. 15All things that the Father has are Mine; this is why I said that He takes from Mine and will disclose it to you.

Verse 12 works as a transition to reintroduce the other Paraclete, the Holy Spirit who Jesus has now called the Spirit of Truth for the third time in His Farewell Discourse.



Jesus said, “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them at the present time.” It’s certainly the case that we humans are easily overloaded, especially when we are stressed. Every student pilot that I’ve instructed gets task saturated and while I still have plenty to say, much to teach, a lot to correct, they are completely unable to even register what I would tell them, let alone digest it, and put it into practice. So, I just stop. There is no point. I would let them know, if they could even hear it, “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them at the present time.”

Here's the interesting part... what I have to say, that they cannot hear in the moment, are things that I've

already told them many times before. Far more times than I can count, a student will all at once get it, and they will say something like, why wasn't I shown this before? I could have really used this bit of information if I had been shown it earlier. They will believe, with every fiber of their being, that this is the first time that they have been exposed to that instruction. I'm here to tell you, it wasn't.

This is precisely what Jesus was talking about as He introduced the problem and then confirmed that He had already told them everything. Jesus is the Truth and as such He has all the Truth. There is not any Truth that exists outside of Jesus. He had already shared every bit of Truth that His Apostles needed, but they had registered, acquired, comprehended, and incorporated practically none of it.

This is why He had largely talked in metaphorical language. Plain language would have done no good. They would not have been able to deal with it and so it would have gone in one ear and out the other.

I've personally seen it thousands of times. With my military students and my college students, with my pilot students and my Bible students. Sometimes it's information overload, sometimes it's task saturation,

sometimes it's anxiety detachment, sometimes it's emotional exhaustion, and sometimes it's simply that you are not ready to receive the new information - you don't have enough prior understanding to attach the new information to - you cannot properly file the new information and it is lost.

If you've never learned geometry or algebra, a lesson in calculus will mean nothing to you and very soon after the class you won't remember any of it.

It's always interesting to me when people excitedly share information with me that they've just learned, not remembering at all that I had tried to explain that to them on one or more previous occasions. When a person is not ready to hear, we do not hear. How often do you learn a new word and then all at once you find that everyone is now using that word?

adjective [koh-puh-**set**-ik] fine; completely satisfactory; okay.

COPACETIC

Cool, Man!

Right on!



I remember well the first time I noticed the phenomenon. I was a teenager and learned the word “copacetic.” I thought it was awesome because I had never in my entire life heard anyone use that word. I now had a truly brand-new word in my vocabulary. Almost instantly, I discovered that seemingly everyone was using the word! How crazy was it that everyone else learned the same word the same day that I learned it... right? When a person is not ready to hear, we do not hear.



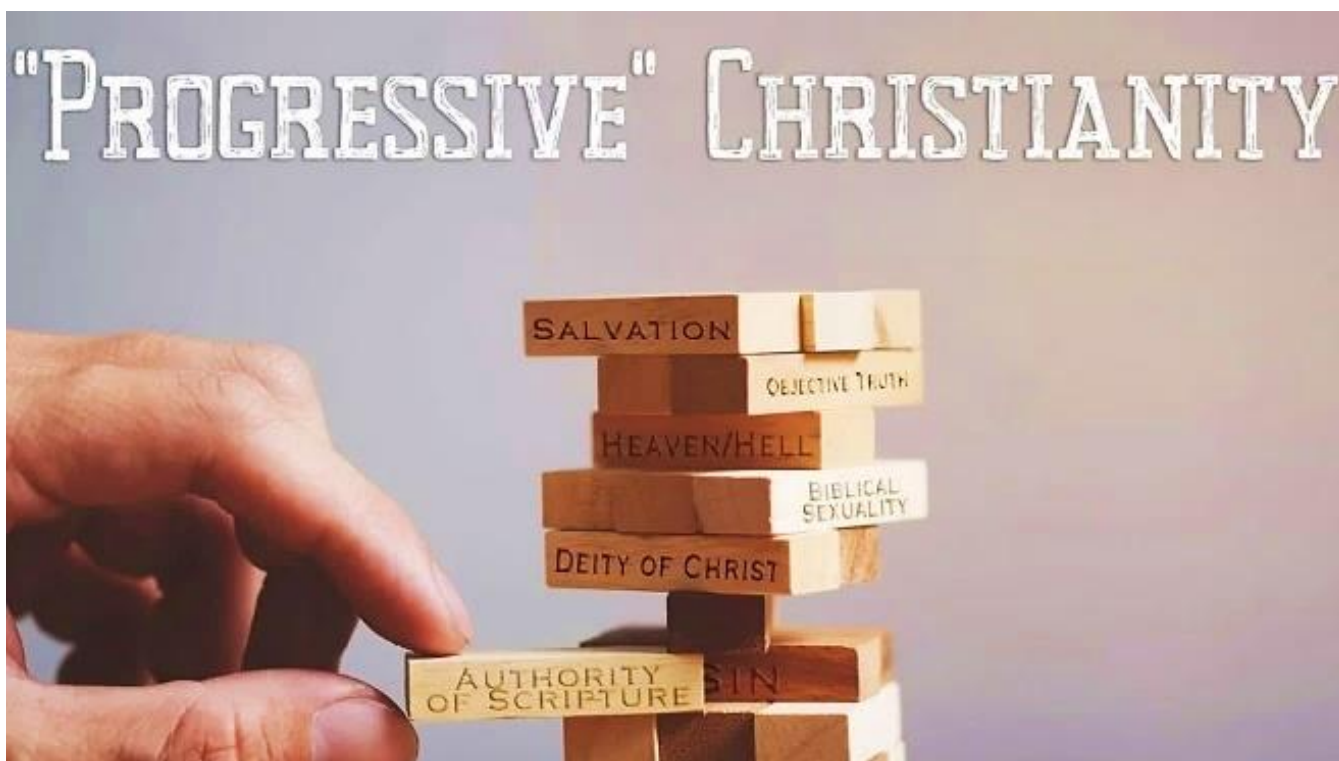
There is nothing in the entire Bible or in church history that would even suggest that Jesus was alluding to things that He Himself had not already told them. There is zero contextual evidence to indicate that the Spirit of Truth was going to give anyone anything that Jesus had not already given. Not a single thing here to imply that the Holy Spirit was going to share some new information, some new revelation, some new insight, some new Truth.

Quite the contrary, quite the contrary. As I just said, Jesus is the Truth; He is the Word of Almighty God and exists as pure Truth. He declared, using the covenantal name of God, "I AM the Truth." The Bible declared in the first chapter of John's Gospel, John 1:18, "No one

has seen God at any time; God the only Son, who is in the arms of the Father, He has explained Him.

This was the Apostle whom Jesus Loved writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit about 40 years after Jesus ascended into Heaven and he did not say that the Holy Spirit explained God. Jesus did not give partial Truth, He gave full Truth, and the point is that the guys could not process it - they could not hear it - they could not bear it - they could not see it - and so the Holy Spirit of Truth was going to come and remind them of things that they completely missed by repeating what Jesus had already taught them until they got it.

This may seem like a minor point, but it is monumentally important to the very foundation of Christianity.



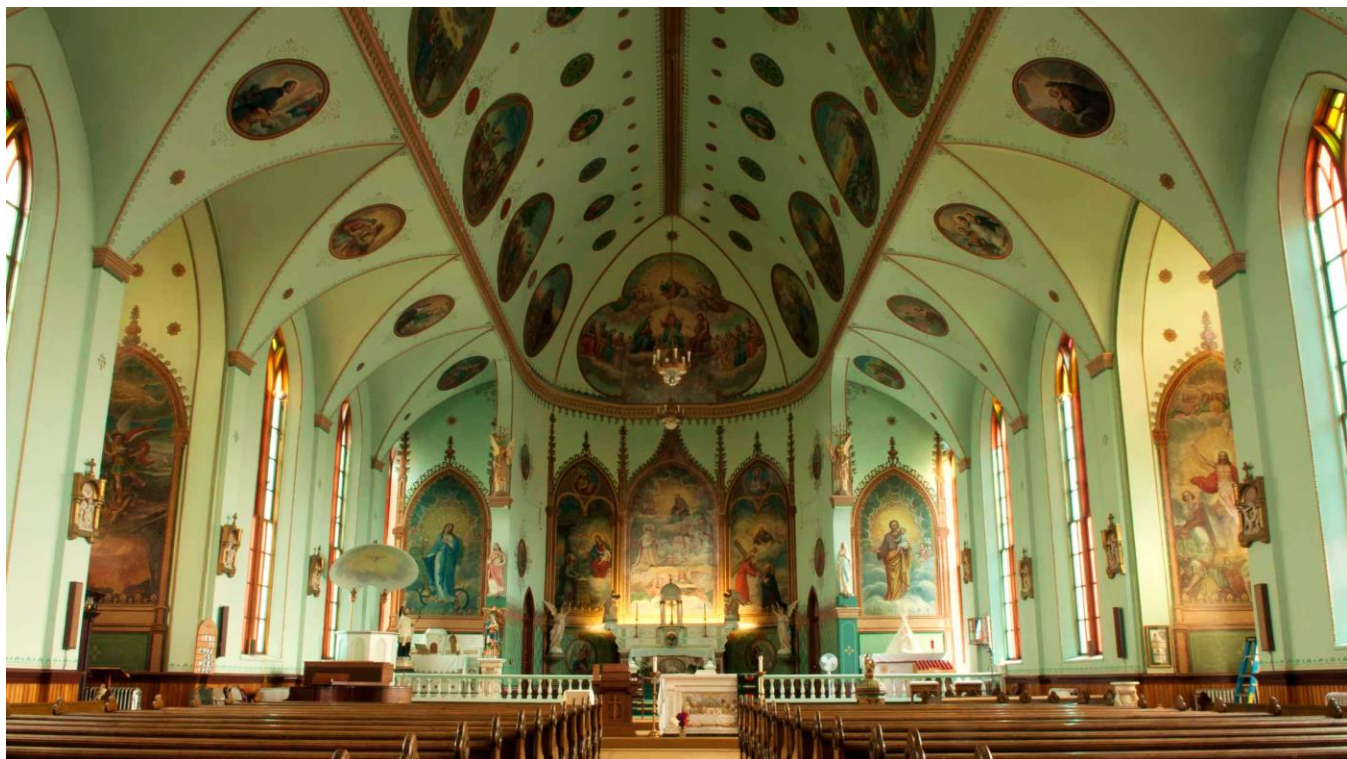
If you allow that the Holy Spirit had something to teach Christians beyond what Jesus had already taught, then you have opened yourself to the doctrine of continued, or progressive revelation. And so Progressive Christianity. To say that more accurately, or at least less misleadingly, is to call it changing or shifting or unsettled Christianity.

Because it necessarily means that the Holy Spirit in some fashion can give new Truth that was previously unknown. It is a new revelation that will either add to or subtract from what Christianity was before. By definition, it will do one or perhaps both of those things, but whatever the specifics, make no mistake about it,

when new revelation from God comes, it alters what's already come before and supersedes it.

That's why we are Christians instead of Jews. The Word of Truth came and dwelt among us and changed everything that came before. If the Spirit of Truth did likewise, then He's still doing likewise, and Christianity is not fixed. It can be anything you think the Spirit is telling you.

A changeable Christianity comes in different flavors and in different modes. One such way is the belief that the grand poohbah mediates new Truth. We see that in Roman Catholicism through the doctrine of Papal Infallibility. When the Pope speaks ex cathedra - meaning from the chair - his pronouncements are believed to come directly from the Holy Spirit.



Whatever He says under such circumstances is seen as a correction to the universal church and takes precedence over whatever the Bible or the church believed and observed beforehand. Perhaps an example is in order... We'll take the subject of Mary the human mother of physical Jesus. The Bible paints a picture of Mary that is at odds with Roman Catholic faith and practice, but why the difference? Progressive revelation over time from the Holy Spirit is what Catholics would say.

Pope Celestine I in 431, declared Mary, not just the mother of Christ, but formally the "Mother of God."

Pope Clement VIII in 1603, declared the “Perpetual Virginity” of Mary. That means that she and her husband Joseph never consummated their marriage and that Jesus’ brothers and sisters described in the Bible were his older stepbrothers and stepsisters - the children of His stepfather Joseph from a previous marriage.

Pope Pius IX in 1854, proclaimed the “Immaculate Conception” of Mary. It means that she herself was born of the Holy Spirit and therefore was without original sin and that she herself remained sinless for her entire life.

Pope Pius XII in 1950, declared the “Assumption” of Mary. Meaning that God did not allow His wife to die. She was assumed into Heaven like Enoch or Elijah without ever tasting death.

Pope Pius XII in 1954, declared Mary as “Queen of Heaven.”

Pope Paul VI in 1964, declared Mary the “Mother of the Church.”

Pope John Paul II in 2002, declared the Holy Rosary (which is 10 “Hail Marys” or prayers to Mary for every

“Our Father”) as “Compendium of the Gospel Message.” It means that Mary is at the heart of Christ centered prayer and “That through praying the Rosary the faithful receive abundant grace... from the very hands of the Mother of the Redeemer.”

It is well documented that Pope John Paul II worked hard to declare Mary con-redemptrix with Christ ex cathedra. What that would have meant is that Mary would have officially been elevated to the place she enjoys unofficially for many Catholics as just as important to one’s salvation as Jesus. The church’s College of Cardinals blocked those efforts... for now.

That’s progressivism and it stems from the belief that God is still giving us new revelation or Truth.

Rulon Jeffs, 93 & his 65 wives. His son Warren had 78 (29 were his dad's widows)



This belief that God can adjust, and correct, core orthodox Christian belief and practice is the root of most, if not all cults. Mormons believe that the president of their religion is uniquely indwelt with the Holy Spirit of Truth and can therefore change their doctrines and dogmas. Polygamy, a foundational and essential practice straight from the founder was outlawed by a new revelation in 1890. Some Mormons disagreed and there was a denominational split giving rise to the continued sexual deviancy to this day of the FLDS.

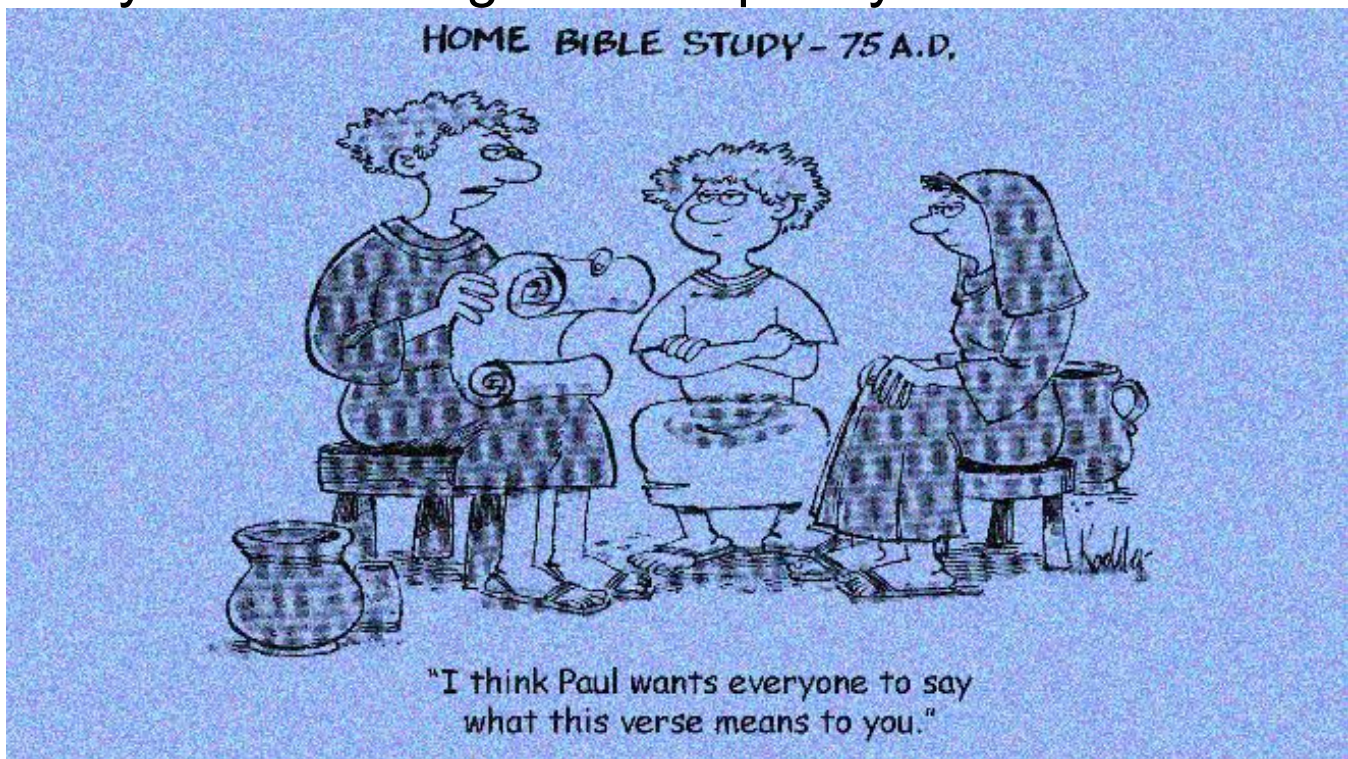
You know,
God has
spoken to you.
He's spoken to
us all. The Bible
is the Inspired
Word of God –
His Message to
you and me for
today.



Here's where it's of greater concern for us... tens of millions and perhaps hundreds of millions of Christians believe that the Holy Spirit can show them new Truth. If that were so, then we would legitimately have as many Christian denominations as there are Christian individuals.

That is the opposite of the unity of the Holy Spirit. No wonder we cannot get along. We all have our opinions, and we think that they come from the "Burning Bush." Of course, we hate and vilify people who disagree with us because they are really disagreeing with God. The concern in Evangelical Christianity is we easily recognize the evil of progressive Christianity in others, but in practice, most of us do the same.

Over the last 20 years at Alêtheia we have seen hundreds of occasions where a person says, “God told me.” Yet, in very short order, they abandon the direction that God told them. Is God just as unstable, just as flakey, and just as unreliable as a human being? Is it okay to tell people what God said to you and then ignore it a short time later? Is it reasonable that God told you something new so quickly?



The head of the theology department at seminary said, “If you discover something in the Bible (in Christianity) that no one else has discovered in 2,000 years, your just wrong.” I remember finding that statement offensive the first time I heard it, but he was right. It was presumptuous arrogance and a desire to make

God fit my expectations. God is Who He is, He never changes. He unfolded a progressive revelation of Himself over human history culminating in Jesus. His progressive revelation culminated in Jesus. Hebrews 1:1–3, 1In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. 3The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.



Sitting down puts the stamp of finality to the plan. The Holy Spirit wasn't sent to further progress the plan, but

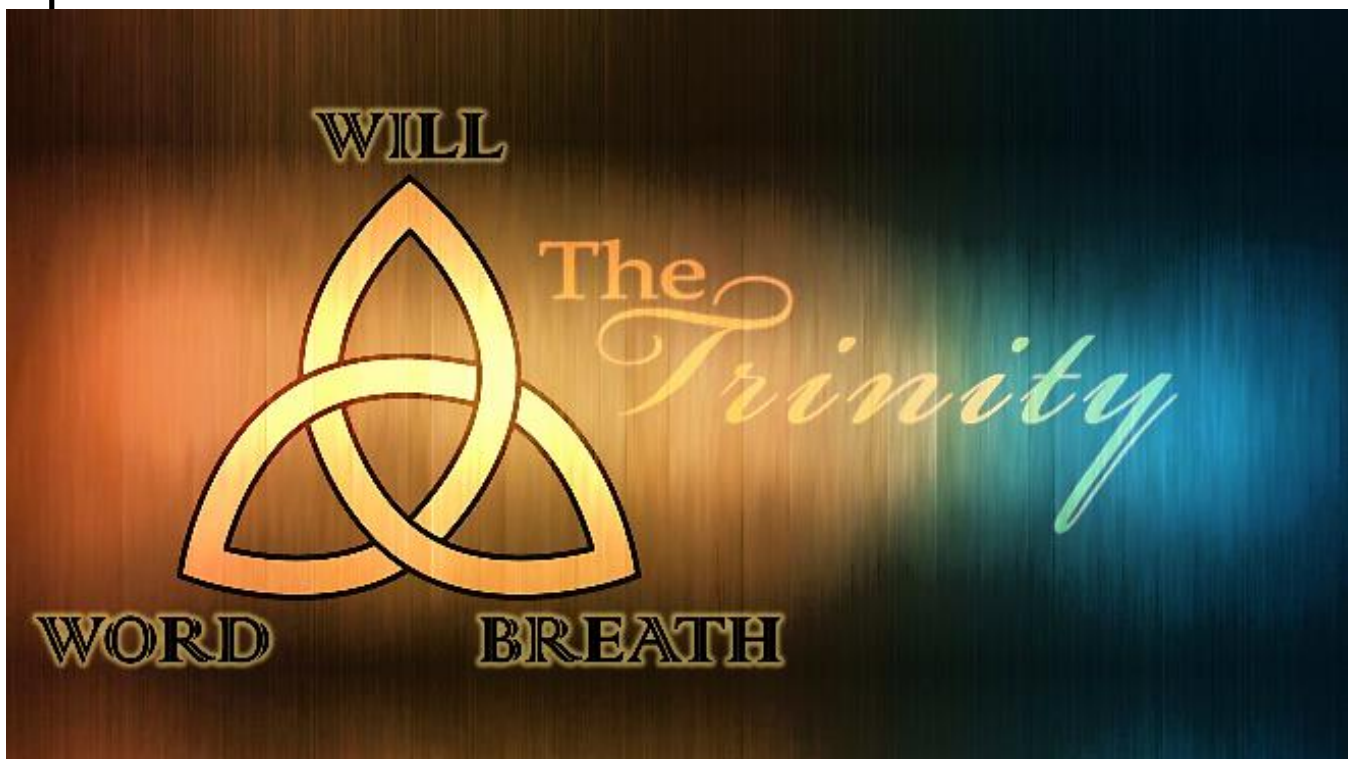
to confirm it. That's what Jesus was saying in John chapter 16. It's basically what He had already said in John chapter 14, "26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and remind you of all that I said to you." Here in chapter 16, Jesus prefaced His statement by acknowledging that His Apostles are unable to grasp all that He has taught them and all that He would like to say to them again... They were maxed out, overloaded, and could take no more, but never fear, it would be okay, because the Holy Spirit of Truth was coming and would remind them, reteach them, re-guide them as to what Jesus taught.

Want further proof? Jesus repeatedly said that He was not teaching anything of His Own, but that everything was the Truth from the Heavenly Father. Here in verse 13, He said that the Holy Spirit, likewise, would teach nothing of His Own, but would only disclose whatever He hears. Okay from Whom does the Holy Spirit hear?

Verse 14, literally says, "That one (meaning the Holy Spirit of Truth) will bring glory to Me because from Me He will receive and deliver to you." The Holy Spirit will glorify Jesus, because He will never add His Own thing, His Own stuff, His Own whatever that would in effect diminish Jesus and bring glory to Himself, The

Holy Spirit of Truth will only take what He hears, what He gets, what He receives, from Jesus and disclose that, and only that to Jesus' disciples.

My friends, it is the Lord's church, not the Spirit's church. It is the Body of Christ, not the Body of the Helper. The Holy Spirit points to Jesus - the Holy Spirit reminds, confirms, and explains, Jesus... There is only One Truth, and that Truth is the Word... The Holy Spirit is specifically called the Spirit of Truth because He will relay the Truth of Jesus. The Truth that Jesus had already shared with His Apostles even though at the time they could not comprehend it... hence the Holy Spirit.



Verse 15 then adds to the weight of this amazing insight. The Heavenly Father is the one Who conceives all Truth and then He speaks it through His Word of Truth and His Word of Truth is propelled into the farthest reaches of the world by His Breath of Truth... There's the Trinity of Almighty God clearly demonstrated.

Quite literally it is just as it is written. Everything that the Heavenly Father has, He has freely given to Jesus - there is nothing held back - there are no secrets - everything in total has been given to Jesus, therefore Jesus possesses everything that the Father has, and the Holy Spirit receives from Jesus precisely what Jesus gives Him and the Holy Spirit gives the church exactly that, no more, no less. Again, the Trinity of God at work.



One final point about this passage that's probably worth addressing is the phrase at the end of verse 13, "He will disclose to you what is to come." Many people will dismiss everything I just said and go back and hold onto that small phrase to advance a doctrine of progressive revelation.

First, we must remember who Jesus was talking to - it was to the 11 remaining Apostles. The Holy Spirit would guide them into a deeper understanding and acceptance of the things that Jesus had already told them and that would include the things that Jesus had told them about the future.



Contextually, it is not His death, resurrection, and ascension, it is the purpose of all of that. It is the comprehension of the sacrificial nature of His death, the fact that it worked proven by His bodily Resurrection and the fact that He is God proven by His bodily ascension into Heaven.

Jesus is presently seated at the right hand of the Father interceding on His church's behalf. The Holy Spirit's ministry to the Body of Christ was by way of inspiration and now by way of illumination. His ministry has always been to conform the church to Jesus in the unity of God's Holy Love. Beyond that the Holy Spirit ministers to the world through the church. Ultimately, in

context, it was the Holy Spirit enabling His original disciples to do what Jesus wanted them to do.



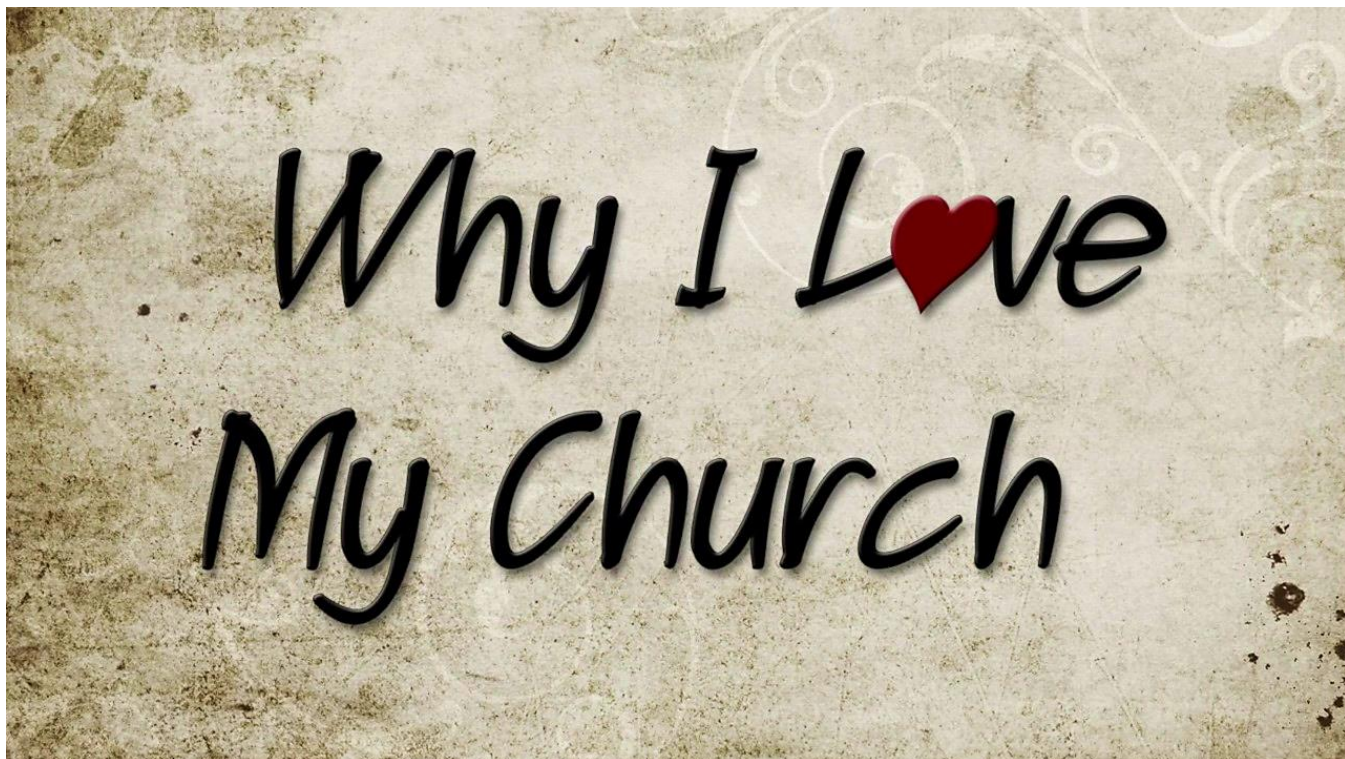
That was to love Him enough to obey Him resulting in a practical, physical, self-sacrificial love for the church just as He commanded. That church, unified by the Holy Spirit in love, convicts the world of its sin, of its false righteousness, and of its well-earned and inevitable judgment by Almighty God. Of course, the world will hate such a church.

What is to come is Jesus. What Jesus was telling His guys was that the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of Truth, would have nothing of His Own to say, but would only relay what Jesus had to say to His church. What was to come, is what was revealed to them, concerning the

Christ's plan to establish the Kingdom and when the time was full to return and make everything right and then to hand the keys of the completed Kingdom over to the Father. That's what is to come... In a Word, Jesus.

We see that in the Holy Scripture that the Father intended, that the Word spoke, and that the Spirit breathed into writing through those particular guys and their authorized agents. The whole of Christ's revelation is contained therein. The Bible could be shorter; it could be longer... It isn't. It could be plainer; it could be more complex... It isn't.

XXXXXXXXXXXX END OF SERMON XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX



1. Love the church through actual self-sacrificial activity. That's what we've seen and it's so good when we love our church family - when we become comfortable with our church... It's home.

As you know our valley has exploded with newcomers. Many of them are Christians in need of a church home. We are full. I know many of you don't believe that, but it is actually true in the metric of comfort. You don't notice it because it's what you've become accustomed to - what's safe to you.

To an outsider, already uncomfortable even trying a new church it's a challenge. First, visitors rarely arrive early, so there's the difficulty in finding a parking spot. Then they enter what is a very tight entryway full of people chatting with each other.

It's bad enough to navigate through the groups if they ignore you, but perhaps worse if they notice and start asking questions. Once through the gauntlet they enter the low ceiling, dark, cave-like area where there is no seat to be found. Are there seats further on - well they're going to have to commit themselves to find out.

Sure enough, by someone's count, on average, 40-50% of the chairs are empty, but unless you want to sit

in the first three rows and really highlight yourself the seats are typically in the middle in twos and threes. Sure, disrupt strangers and slide on in and sit next to other strangers.

Whether you believe me or not, whether you like it or not, our facility is at the comfort level capacity. It is irrelevant how many seats are in this room - it's about the capacity of this room. 80-100 people is the capacity. It's also the capacity of the parking lot, the entryway, the fellowship hall, and the bathrooms.

I promise you that this church cannot grow. Perhaps if we had a rock concert, and a pastor wearing skinny jeans we could jam in some more people, but for what we offer, this place is full, and we've proven it over and over... We're just bouncing at the stops.

Now, what to do? In praying about this and in talking with dozens of people from my fellow pastors, the elders, and a whole host of other people I believe that there are three basic options facing Alêtheia.

1) Do nothing. We have a great church family - let's just enjoy what we've got and let the outsiders know that we're not taking new members at this time... We do that by doing nothing overt - just maintain the status

quo and they'll get the message. Perhaps the savvy ones can leave their number and we'll call if we have a vacancy. I mean, it's only fair, we got here first, we got ours, they can go find a different church.

As you can probably guess, I do not think that Jesus would have us do that. I believe that He wants us to do what we are able to do in accommodating new people.

2) We could do what practically every church expert and pastor would advocate. We could double the size of the parking lot, the foyer, the bathrooms, and the sanctuary for zero cost by simply having two services.

That's the smart play, but we are a church that desperately loves our unity and that is rare. If we don't want change because we don't like change, or because we selfishly want to keep ourselves comfortable and happy, then we need the Holy Spirit to grow us up a bit more. If it is because we love our church, then we would be fools to ruin it. I choose to believe it is the latter.

3) We could move the service out to the new building, doubling our space. After a ton of prayer and a ton of meetings and a ton of words spilled all over the place,

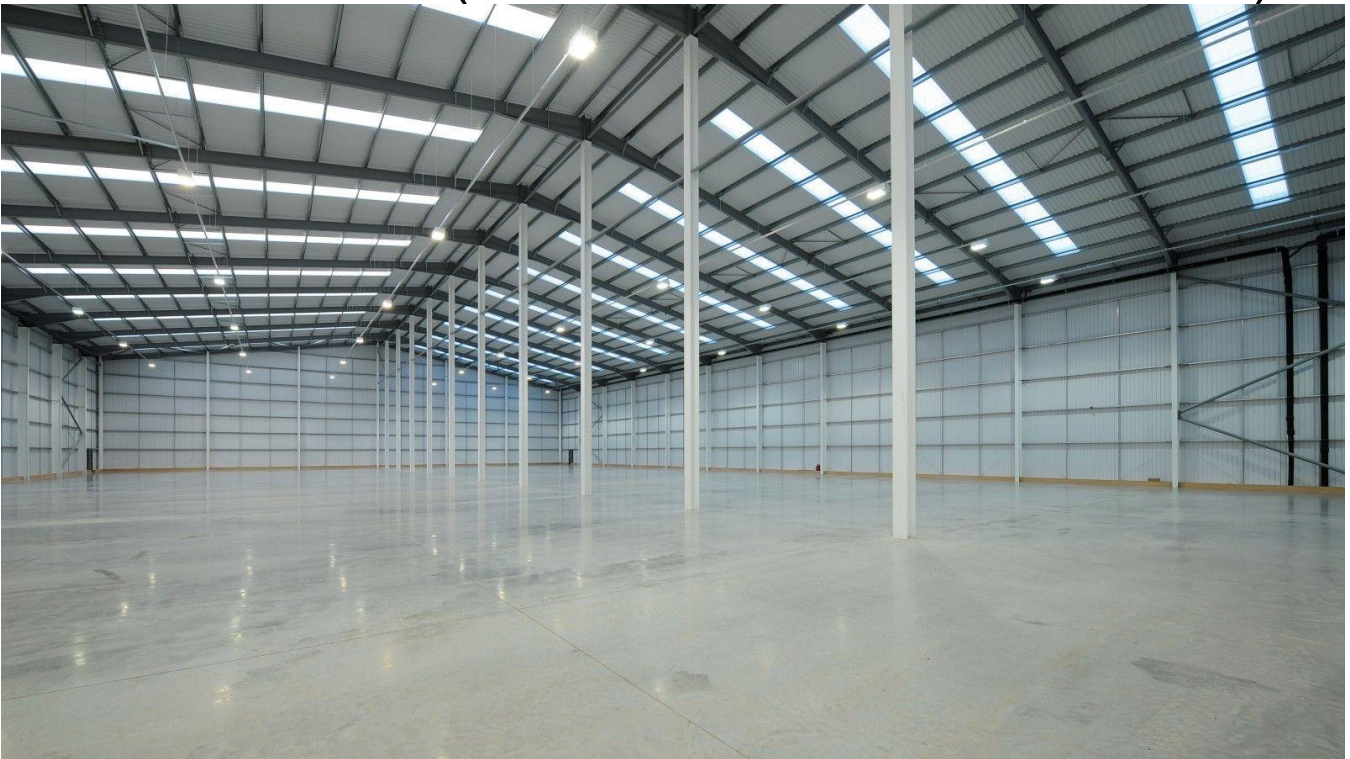
the unanimous decision of the Elders and so my decision is that we will try that.

The present sanctuary would become the kid's center, the current fellowship hall would become the foyer. Because our present audio-visual system is on its last legs, we have money in the budget for replacement equipment. This way instead of throwing the old stuff out, we can put the new stuff in the new building and the kids can use the old stuff in here.

It wouldn't be as comfortable and homey, and it would require a sacrifice from us to accommodate newcomers. We can make it nice, with banners and other decorations. We'll install a wall of sorts to cut the room down so it isn't so cavernous, we'll have a portable stage and other accoutrement to make it nice, but it will have its drawbacks. It will require trust in me, and it will require sacrifice from you.



It won't be this... (Basilica Notre-Dame Montreal)



But it won't be this either. The question you have to ask yourself is do you trust me to lead this little church with the sight given me by God and are you willing to

sacrifice for the church universal and not just the church local?