

**JOKE:** A man is driving down the road and breaks down near a monastery. He goes to the monastery, knocks on the door, and says, "My car broke down. Do you think I could stay the night?" The monks graciously accept him, feed him dinner, and even fix his car. As the man tries to fall asleep, he hears a strange sound. The next morning, he asks the monks what the sound was, but they say, "We can't tell you. You're not a monk."

The man is disappointed but thanks them anyway and goes about his merry way. Some years later, the same man breaks down in front of the same monastery. The monks again accept him, feed him, and even fix his car. That night, he hears the same strange noise that he had heard years earlier. The next morning, he asks what it is, but the monks reply, "We can't tell you. You're not a monk."

The man says, "All right, all right. I'm dying to know. If the only way I can find out what that sound was is to become a monk, how do I become a monk?" The monks reply, "You must travel the earth and tell us how many blades of grass

there are and the exact number of sand pebbles. When you find these numbers, you will become a monk."

The man sets about his task. Some forty-five years later, he returns and knocks on the door of the monastery. He says, "I have traveled the earth and have found what you have asked for. There are 145 billion 236 million 284 thousand 232 blades of grass and 231 quad trillion 281 trillion 219 billion 999 million 129 thousand 382 sand pebbles on the earth." The monks reply, "Congratulations. You are now a monk. We shall now show you the way to the sound."

The monks lead the man to a wooden door, where the head monk says, "The sound is right behind that door." The man reaches for the knob, but the door is locked. He says, "Real funny. May I have the key?" The monks give him the key, and he opens the door. Behind the wooden door is another door made of stone. The man demands the key to the stone door. The monks give him the key, and he opens it, only to find a door made of ruby. He demands another key from the monks, who provide it. Behind that door is

another door, this one made of sapphire. So it went until the man had gone through doors of emerald, silver, topaz, and amethyst.

Finally, the monks say, "This is the last key to the last door."

The man is relieved to no end. He unlocks the door, turns the knob, and behind that door he is amazed to find the source of that strange sound.

You want to know what it was? I can't tell you what it is because you're not a monk.

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### **The Third Word from the Cross: John The Beloved**

The third word that Jesus spoke from the cross is found within the scene recorded in John 19.

John 19:23–27 (NIV): 23 When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one

for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. 24 “Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot who will get it.” This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said, “They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.” So this is what the soldiers did. 25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman, here is your son,” 27 and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

I find it interesting that of the seven last words Christ spoke from the cross, not one of the first three words concerned Himself. Each of the first three words were aimed at others.

I don’t know about you but I know for me when I have had a bad day. I think to myself I didn’t deserve to be talked to that way, or something like that. I have at times focused on me. Jesus is being crucified on a cross in excruciating

pain and he thinks about others before Himself.

The first word was devoted to His murders when He said, "Father, forgive them because they don't know what they are doing."

The second word was devoted to the thief on the cross next to Him who was about to be living the Garden Life with Jesus when He said, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

And now we see Jesus' third word being aimed at His mother and friend, John, when Jesus says, "Woman...behold your son. And John...behold your mother."

Not once has Jesus spoken of His own needs in His time of greatest distress to this point while on the cross.

Here's a thought that maybe you never considered. When you put your family's needs before your own, you are imitating Jesus in a powerful way.

Dad, when you walk in from the office after a long day and the first thing your son asks you to do is to join him upstairs in a video game and you do that rather than heading to the place you really want to go which is your chair where you can plop down and exhale from the day: in that moment you look more like Jesus than you realize to your son.

Mom, when you get up early to make lunches for the kids before they head off to school instead of telling them to fend for themselves because you just want to sit and sip your cup of coffee in peace after folding the last load of laundry late the night before...and still have not heard a thank you yet; you are choosing to put your kids needs before your own wants: you look more like Jesus than you realize in that moment.

When you put your family's needs before your own, you look more like Jesus than you realize.

However, sometimes we find ourselves in situations with our family members and we wish we could do something to

help them in their time of need.

Most parents would change places with their kid in a heartbeat if they knew their kid was being bullied or hurt by someone else? We can't stand to see our kids being hurt or in a situation where we feel helpless. And yet sometimes we find ourselves in such a situation where all we can do is be near them in the midst of their pain.

I remember the movie Karate Kid. Mom and his son had moved to a new place her son felt so out of place. He was being bullied, beaten up. . . Until he met Mr. Miyagi. Mr. Miyagi became family. Oh Daniel didn't understand wax on, wax off. But Mr. Miyagi became the father figure that Danielson needed.

Back to our story. . .

Imagine what kinds of emotions must have been present in Mary, as she watched her son suffering on the cross.

Imagine seeing your kid up there on the cross; how would you feel in those moments?

Look back at the text in John 19:23-25.

John 19:23–25 (NIV): 23 When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. 24 “Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot who will get it.” This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said, “They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.” So this is what the soldiers did. 25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

I don’t know, but at that moment maybe Mary wanted revenge? Think about it Jesus is hanging there having done nothing wrong. Falsely accused.



Sometimes we need others around us to hold us back so we don't react in the moment and try to destroy the ones who hurt our kids.

The range of emotions that Mary must have been feeling on that day in those moments were overwhelming for any person, let alone for a mom looking up at her son.

However, what is worth noticing about this scene in the passage is that we see Mary looking at her son writhing in pain not alone, but with some of her family and friends.

Do you have those kinds of friends in your life right now who would stand with you even in that kind of horrible setting? No matter who you are, we need each other. We all need people in our lives who will stand with us during the most difficult days.

Life was not meant to be lived in isolation. In this scene from John's gospel we see a hurting mom not have to suffer in isolation at the foot of the cross. Instead, both Jesus and Mary were surrounded by others.

When you go through those seasons in life when you feel like you are getting crucified, it helps to have family and friends around you and with you. Jesus at least did not suffer and die alone. He had family and friends with Him according to this passage.

John 19:25. "...but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene."

Notice those first words again.

"...but standing by the cross..."

We need people "standing by" us in life. The word in the Greek for "standing by" is the word para. We get the English word "parallel" that means to be alongside, to stand alongside, or to walk alongside.

May we be people who parallel our lives with others as we intentionally are with someone walking alongside, standing alongside and sitting alongside them in their life so they

don't need to be alone.

There are moments in life when all you can do is compassionately be with someone who is suffering. When we cannot fix a problem, at least be with people going through the problem.

Romans 12:15 (NIV): 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

Throughout his ministry Jesus would always show compassion.

Matthew 15:32 (NIV): 32 Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way."

Matthew 20:34 (NIV): 34 Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.

Here's the thing as a follower of Jesus, God wants to use you to be a priest in somebody's life. It's part of what it means fully to understand our privilege and responsibility of what is called "the priesthood of the believer."

God designed you to have a priesthood, to exercise your priesthood and to grow in your priesthood.

Revelation 1:1–6 (NIV): The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, 2 who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near. 4 John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins

by his blood, 6 **and has made us to be a kingdom and priests** to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

1 Peter 2:9 (NIV): 9 But you are a chosen people, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light

What does that mean? Does that mean you need to wear a collar and work in a church and say your prayers in a special kind of way? No. It means God has put something in you that He wants worked out for His purposes in other people's lives as you are with them on His behalf.

You need to understand that our God is always at work.

John 5:16–18 (NIV): 16 So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. 17 In his defense Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working." 18 For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was

even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

The truth is Jesus is at work in the lives of your neighbors, at work in the lives of people in your office, in the lives of classmates at your school. In the middle of all this work that God is up to all around us each day, Jesus has a purpose for you to co-labor with Him to be a royal priesthood so that they can come to the knowledge of the fact the God truly is a Good Good Father.

God knew where you would live even before you knew where you would live. And God wants you to be with those people who live in your neighborhoods and with those whom you work with and go to school with each day.

Leonard Sweet says in his book, *Nudge*, "Sometimes it's less about our witness than our withness. In fact, our best witness is our withness. To be a witness you have to have withness."

As we consider these perspectives about being with other people, think about these questions. How many non-church people are you doing life with? How many people in your neighborhood are you doing life with that do not have a relationship with Jesus?

Don't hear what I'm not saying. Am I saying having church activities, being involved in a Bible study, enjoying fellowships and activities at church with church friends is a bad thing? No.

Do I think God still has us on this planet for purposes that go beyond just hanging out with church friends and filling our schedules with church activities?

Absolutely.

Do I think God placed us in our home in our neighborhood to do more than pay bills and taxes, eat and sleep, just to start all over again the following day? 100% I do.

God placed me on my street, in my neighborhood, at my

job, to be a priestly presence to my neighbors who do not yet know God. And for me to be a witness to my neighbors, I first must have a witness among my neighbors.

And you do to if you are going to make God's dreams for your life and the community you are living in come true in the days ahead. We must be willing to have "a compassionate being witness" among our neighbors.

We must invest time being with God and with people. And let me say this when you invest some time with God people will take notice.

Acts 4:13 (NIV): 13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

From the Passion Translation - The council members were astonished as they witnessed the bold courage of Peter and John, especially when they discovered that they were just ordinary men who had never had religious training.



Then they began to understand the effect Jesus had on them simply by spending time with him.

You are just as usable and priestly as any pastor or priest who serves in a church. That's why the Holy Spirit is inspired Peter to write these words down to remind us who we are in 1 Peter 2.

I read it once but let me read it again. . .

1 Peter 2:9 (NIV): 9 But you are a chosen people, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light

Let me read that from The Passion Translation as well:

1 Peter 2:9 (TPT): 9 But you are God's chosen treasure —priests who are kings, a spiritual "nation" set apart as God's devoted ones. He called you out of darkness to experience his marvelous light, and now he claims you as his very own. He did this so that you would broadcast his

glorious wonders throughout the world.

However, you must be with people to be a priest to people.

And when you are with them, know that God is at work through you in the middle of your witness.

The religious folk got offended by Jesus because he hung out with tax collectors and sinners. But it was one such encounter with the woman at the well that transformed an entire village.

As we look back at the scene of Jesus' death, it is interesting to notice who was with Jesus at the cross that day.

"...but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene."

There were four women and one guy who were "compassionately being with" Jesus. It's interesting that of

the eleven disciples who still were alive and had been with Jesus over the last three years, only John was still with Him on his dying day. The rest of the guys were in hiding for their lives. Do you know why the guys were in hiding?

Because if they had shown up at the cross, the Romans would have arrested them for being a threat to Rome.

So why didn't they arrest John? Can't be entirely sure but it was probably because he was so young and may not have had a beard thus possibly looking like a young boy who was not a perceived threat to the empire. Neither were the women viewed as credible threats in that time.

Of those women present, Jesus' mom was one of the four women mentioned at the cross.

Look back in John 19:26-27 again specifically about Jesus making eye-contact with His friend, John, and His mother, Mary.

John 19:26–27 (NIV): 26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman, here is your son,” 27 and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

As Jesus is looking at His mother, He sees her suffering in her soul as she looks at Him. In those moments the prophecy that Simeon spoke over Mary when Jesus was dedicated in the temple as a baby was coming true.

Listen to what Simeon said would happen to Mary in Luke 2

Luke 2:34–35 (NIV): 34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.

Moms, do you ever feel like a sword pierces through your own soul because of what is going on with your kids?

If you do, then hang in there and know that your church family is meant to be with you. And what happened in the text for Mary is true for you today. Jesus not only saw His mom in pain on that day, but also Jesus sees you in your pain on this day. And Jesus calls for other people, especially for people who make up the church, to be priests to hold each other in the midst of your pain.

This is part of not only the greatness of our God but also the sensitivity, deep compassion and love of Jesus in His response to Mary while hanging on the cross.

“He said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.”

Men, dads, and sons, please take a close look at Jesus at this moment in His life and consider something.

Just as Jesus refused to let personal agony distract Him from being good and faithful son, we too must at times move through our pain and be a man like Jesus demonstrated at this moment. Even if you feel like life has you strung up and in pain, be faithful to do the right thing for your family.

While you are trying to keep your mortgage current and yourself employed, and you're realizing that you are not going to retire a millionaire at age fifty, be faithful to do the right thing for your family.

When the picture of life that you're living in looks a little different and is a little more painful than what you ever imagined, remember this truth that Jesus demonstrated at the cross:

Our pain does not absolve us from our responsibilities.

What Jesus did on the cross before He ever went on to say, "It is finished," was make sure His family was taken care of before He died. He made sure His mom was in good hands

and provided for after He would breathe His last breath on the cross.

Jesus called on His friend, John, to make sure that Mary had a roof over her head and protection. Jesus knew that as a widowed woman in the first-century culture, His mother would have been extremely vulnerable in that society.

Jesus loved His family and made sure that before His mission was complete that His family was taken care of, He needed to make sure all was well with mom before His death took place.

**Show video:** John the Beloved ([skitguys.com](http://skitguys.com))

After Jesus made sure His mom was taken care of, the next verse says,

John 19:28 (NIV): Later, knowing that everything had now been finished. . .

What a beautiful element concerning the nature and character of our God. His mission was not deemed complete in rescuing the world from sin, death, Satan, and hell until His family was taken care of as well.

What a perspective to ponder which communicates that our God values family in a huge way.

1 John 3:1 (NIV): See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

Romans 8:14–17 (NIV): 14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in



his glory.

John 1:12–13 (NIV): 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Galatians 4:4–7 (NIV): 4 But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. 6 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." 7 So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

Ephesians 2:19–22 (NIV): 19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole

building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

May we be counted as one who regularly is compassionate with others even as we may find ourselves in pain.