

Joke: A new captain becomes leader of a company of soldiers. As he goes about learning everything on how they do things he finds two soldiers guarding a bench. He asks his sergeants why they're guarding the bench and they say the previous commander ordered it. He calls the previous commander up, now a major, asking why he did that and the major said its because the previous commander ordered it. So he calls that commander, now a Lt. Colonel asking why he ordered it, gets the same answer that it was ordered by the previous commander. The captain goes through this song and dance a couple more times before he gets a hold of an old retired 4 star General. He politely calls him up and asks him why he ordered his men to guard this bench that all the commanders since then have maintained the tradition. The old retired General goes "wait, is the paint still wet?"

Let me start off today with a question. Are you ready? Have you ever had an earworm? I'm willing to bet almost all of us have had an earworm at one time or another, and most likely many of us get multiple earworms every year.

Why are you all looking at me like that?

Do you know what an earworm is? If you ever get an earworm, there is no medical remedy, you don't need some anti-fungal cream or an oral medication for treatment.

You need to do is just play a new song.

Earworm is the official term for that catchy tune or song that gets stuck in your head and plays over and over again, you know the ones that can be really difficult to get rid of.

You've had that experience, right? That's called an earworm!

Don't you hate it when that happens?

You know the ones. . . *It's a small world after all, Don't Stop Believin'* , *who let the dogs out*, *YMCA*, or how about *The Pink Panther Theme Song*

I think sometimes we get a thought about God stuck in our head that plays over and over, that's not at all accurate, and which can be really difficult to get rid of.

Thoughts like. . .

God is angry. God is disappointed. God is punishing me.

Sometimes the things we think about God are untrue or at the very least only half-true. And we need to unlearn all those lies and half-truths about God and replace those with the full-truth that are consistent with the teachings, life, and ministry of Jesus Christ.

We need to get rid of some of the stinkin' thinkin'

In other words, sometimes we need to play a new song in our head when it comes to relating to the God that Jesus Christ came and revealed to us.

Jesus didn't come to change God's mind about us. Jesus came to change our minds about God.

Today we're going to look at some things Jesus taught about himself that were in direct contrast to the religious leaders of his day.

The Pharisees played one song in people's heads — a song of shame, guilt and alienation. Jesus brought a new song, one of love and restoration. When Jesus teaches us something about himself, he is automatically teaching us something about God.

Hebrews 1:3 (NIV): The 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.

We're going to read John 10:1-10 in a moment, but before we do I want to give some background. Jesus is talking with the Pharisees in this passage.

And it's important to note, this passage is directly tied to the story in chapter 9 where Jesus heals the man blind from birth. This passage in John 10 is a continuation of that story.

What happened in the previous chapter is that Jesus heals the blind man out of pure love and goodness. The man didn't ask to be healed, but Jesus healed him because Jesus shows us that God's core nature is love.

1 John 4:16 (NIV): And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them

The Pharisees — the religious leaders in Jesus' day— were angry that Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath. They were also angry that more and more people were starting to follow Jesus. They were convinced that both the blind man and Jesus himself were sinners.

The Pharisees took the man that was now healed of his blindness, interrogated him, and threw him out of the synagogue for not rejecting Jesus.

They also threatened to throw out his parents.

The Pharisees had no hesitation to alienate people who didn't measure up to their standards. The story ends with Jesus telling the Pharisees that *they* are the blind ones! They are spiritually blind because of the way they treat people and try to exercise power and control over them.

Then, Jesus continues in chapter 10? . .

John 10:1–10 (NIV): “Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2 The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own,

he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." 6 Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them. 7 Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. 9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Jesus uses a lot of imagery: sheep, gates, shepherds, thieves and robbers.

And He is both the shepherd mentioned in verse 2 and the gate mentioned in verse 9.

In John 14 Jesus tells us also that He is the way, the truth, and the life.

And in John 10 Jesus is contrasting himself with the Pharisees who just threw a tantrum because a blind man was healed on the Sabbath.

The Pharisees are the "thieves and robbers" who care nothing about the sheep. They had so many rules 613 rules, that put people in bondage and truth is they cared more about themselves instead of the people they were meant to guide and care for.

In essence they were bullies!

How do we keep out thieves and robbers? How do we do this in our own homes? We have doors and windows and we lock them.

Jesus says he is “the gate.” Gates work the same way.

Jesus, our protector, is contrasting himself to the Pharisees who were bullies.

If Jesus is nothing like the Pharisees, then the Father is nothing like them either.

The Pharisees used shame, guilt, and alienation as weapons. That is what bullies do, especially religious bullies.

They try to shame people into submitting to their demands and if the people do not comply, they alienate them. They cut them off and cancel them. They kick them out of the group, out of the fellowship.

Bullies demand compliance, or else. This is why the Pharisees kicked the former blind man out of the synagogue.

Have you ever met a bully?

Watch this. . .

John 9:13–16 (NIV): They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. 14 Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man’s eyes was a Sabbath. 15 Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. “He put mud on my eyes,” the man replied, “and I washed, and now I see.”

16 Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others asked, “How can a sinner perform such signs?” So they were divided.

Oh wait theres more. . .

John 9:18–23 (NIV): They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man’s parents.

19 “Is this your son?” they asked. “Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?” 20 “We know he is our son,” the parents answered, “and we know he was born blind. 21 But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don’t know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself.” 22 His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. 23 That was why his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

I love this next part. . .

John 9:26–27 (NIV): Then they asked him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” 27 He answered, “I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?”

A few more verses from John 9.. .

After they hurled insults, used some intimidation the Pharisees once again bullied the man born blind and I just love how he responded. . .

John 9:30 (NIV): The man answered, “Now that is remarkable! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes.

I can almost sense the sarcasm. How do you think that set with the religious folks?

John 9:31-34 (NIV): 31 We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. 32 Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” 34 To this they replied, “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!” And they threw him out.

And there are some people who read the Scriptures and think just like the Pharisees that God is a bully. But, God will never bully you. He loves you too much for that.

God has always shown mercy, love, and compassion. When Adam and Eve tripped up in the garden, disobeyed the commands of God. He didn’t strike them down, sure they were kicked out of the garden, but that was His mercy.

Truth is church there are consequences for the choices we make, and the sins we let entangle us. But God still chooses to show mercy in spite of us.

See judgement is getting what we deserve, mercy is not getting the punishment we do deserve, and grace is getting a gift we don’t deserve.

Big difference between the three. We deserve death, but in mercy God sent Jesus to die on our behalf, and by His grace He gives us eternal life. It is by grace we have been saved.

You can't earn it, buy it, or inherit it. His grace gave it..

The Pharisees would try to intimidate, bully, and shame you. The Holy Spirit on the other hand convicts us of our sin. Not to bring shame but to bring attention to the things we've done wrong, sins we have committed, and mistakes we have made.

God convicts, but never will He shame us.

Here's the difference between conviction and shame. Conviction says, "I *made* a mistake." Shame says, "I *am* a mistake."

Conviction has to do with something I've done, while shame has to do with who I am, my identity and what I believe about myself.

See the difference? The Holy Spirit will convict us but he will never shame us.

Some of you are living in shame today. You have this earworm, this song, playing in your head that God is ashamed of you, that God is disgusted with you, that God is so disappointed in you. You feel like you're just messed up once to many times and God is ready to kick you to the curb.

And if that's you, God wants to heal you of that, because that song in your head that plays over and over again is an untruth that needs to be replaced with Jesus' truth.

Maybe these verses will help:

Romans 8:1–2 (NIV): Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 10:11 (NIV): As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.”

God is our protector, not our bully. Jesus reveals a Father who loves us unconditionally even when He sees our sin and mistakes. The truth is: we don’t change because of rules or threats, we change because we are known, loved, and accepted.

Romans 2:4 (NIV): Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

“He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out” that’s what we read in John 10 verse 3.

The Father meets us right where we are, calls us by name, and then leads us out on a journey of transformation and healing.

That’s the song we need playing in our head!

Let’s read John 10 verse 3 and 4 again,

John 10:3–4 (NIV): The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on

ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.

One way sheep distinguish between human voices is their past associations and interactions with people?

When someone feeds a sheep regularly and is kind to them, they associate with that person and learn to distinguish that person from the others.

Jesus uses the example of sheep for a reason: they are uniquely able to hear and distinguish from one person to another.

And because we are all made in the image of God, we too have a unique ability to distinguish between God's voice and the voice of the enemy. We are made in His image on purpose for a purpose.

Can you distinguish between the voice of Jesus and the other voices that influence you? That inner, intuitive voice of the Holy Spirit.

That is the new song we need playing in our head.

And the more you spend time with Him the more recognizable His voice becomes.

And when the thoughts are not His thoughts about you, you need to take them captive and bring them into the obedience of Christ.

Let me give you a few ways of how to hear the voice of Jesus in your life. Help, if you will on how to get that new song playing in your head.

First, we learn to hear his voice by reading his teachings in Scripture. I have had Him reveal so much to me simply from reading His Word.

I will read something, and you need to understand I've studied the Word. Read the Bible through multiple times in different translations and I will be reading something and have something pop out and I think when did He put that there.

It's not like it was something just added, I just had a revelation about that particular part of Scripture.

So, I want to encourage you to saturate your hearts and minds with His word.

Psalm 1:1–3 (NIV): Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, 2 but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. 3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers.

Joshua 1:8 (NIV): Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Philippians 4:8 (TPT): So keep your thoughts continually fixed on all that is authentic and real, honorable and admirable, beautiful and respectful, pure and holy, merciful and kind. And fasten your thoughts on every glorious work of God, praising him always.

Second, we learn to hear his voice in prayer. It's in prayer that God may give us an idea, a thought, or an impression that otherwise would not have come to us had we not paused to pray and listen.

Thomas Merton said, *Prayer is waiting for a word we cannot speak to ourselves,*"

Jesus will speak to us if we create space and give him room.

Third, I want you to know that the voice of Christ has a particular accent. Accents are distinctive. Sometimes you get an idea of where someone is from by hearing their accent. You can tell if someone is from the south or if they're from Boston by their accent!

Jesus has a particular accent that helps us recognize it's him speaking to us.

Jesus' accent sounds like *kindness*.

Jesus' accent is *compassionate*.

Jesus' accent encourages us to display *His love towards others*

Jesus' accent is *truthful*.

Jesus' accent encourages us to be *courageous* and *faithful*.

Finally, I want you to know that hearing the voice of Jesus as He speaks to us will meet our deepest needs and heal our deepest wounds.

If the song you're hearing in your head isn't helpful, compassionate, or loving then it's probably not God's.

Remember Scripture says, "God's kindness leads us to *repentance*"

Jesus says. . .

John 10:10 (NIV): The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

One of the best ways we can hear a new song in our head is to practice listening to the voice of Jesus.

Through scripture, prayer, learning his accent, and letting his words penetrate deeply into our hearts and minds.

His people know his voice! He leads us into green pastures, into good things, into a meaningful life. And he heals and transforms us every step of the way.

God is good all the time. . .and all the time God is good.