

## “I Will Not Leave You As Orphans”

Words are vehicles of thought. They are transporters of ideas from one mind to another. Sometimes, a single word conveys a whole truckload of considerations, or elicits almost an excess of emotions. In other cases, four or five words strung together, carefully chosen, deliver a mental picture so elaborate, vibrant, and pregnant with meaning that it seems to defy the recipient's ability to plumb the depths of them all in concert. Emphasis added to an individual word in delivery of the string provides various nuances of understanding that are as important as a master's delicately placed brushstrokes from a mixed palette of colors to a fine masterpiece. It allows one that is willing to look and listen carefully the ability to “see” and “hear” on a completely different level- to drink the collection in fully and have his thirst for understanding satiated. Jesus, the Master, made a simple statement to His disciples in John 14:18 that well-illustrates these points....

***I will not leave you as orphans.*** Emphasizing “I” is an affirmation of personal commitment. Jesus is providing assurance to His disciples based upon everything they have come to know about Him- and much more than even they understand (see also John 14:9-11).

***I will not leave you as orphans.*** “Will,” when used as a verb, indicates not only the *capability* or *sufficiency* to perform the stated action, but also the *desire* and *determination* to do so. Obviously, when the Son of God says, “*I will...*” it is a powerful statement of *personal determination* that promises the *surety* of the action being performed!

***I will not leave you as orphans.*** “Not” changes the construction of the sentence from a *positive* to a *negative* affirmation. It in no way diminishes the surety of the described action, but it does shift the focus and emphasize that it won't be performed rather than asserting that it will be done. We commonly turn *positive statements* into *negative affirmations* to make a stronger emphasis. Jesus is apparently doing the same thing here.

***I will not leave you as orphans.*** “Leave” here means to *abandon* or *disregard*. He has told the disciples that He must “*go to prepare a place for you,*” cf. 14:3, but here affirms that His absence from them is not without *regard* and *comfort*. In the previous verses, He has promised to send “*another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is, the Spirit of truth,* cf. vv.16-17. As Jesus had *guided* and *comforted* them, so also would the Spirit.

***I will not leave you as orphans.*** “You” is here the plural pronoun for *the disciples*- specifically, the twelve who have been with Him from the beginning (cf. Acts 1:21-26 where Matthias is chosen as the replacement of Judas). Jesus' words of promise and assurance are *personal* to these men.

***I will not leave you as orphans.*** “As” is a word of comparison. The comparison is intended to further explain and highlight that although Jesus *is* leaving the disciples, He is *not* abandoning them.

***I will not leave you as orphans.*** “Orphans” is, obviously, the completion of the comparison phrase “*as orphans.*” At this time, there were no government agencies or benevolent humanitarian institutions committed to the care of orphans. Those abandoned by their parents- either by choice or by death, were left to largely fend for themselves in a state of abject poverty and little regard from the community. This final dark term completes the portrait of words Jesus is painting with this one sentence. Though He is *leaving* them, the disciples would *not* be *abandoned* or *left alone* to face the task before them *as orphans*.

Each word of the sentence Jesus uttered to His disciples was important. Each one provided a stroke of color which, when emphasized individually, gives depth of meaning to the overall picture being displayed. If this is doubted, read each of the boldface sentences above aloud, emphasizing each of the italicized/underlined words. This causes us to contemplate each emphasized word's contribution to the overall thought being presented. The point of all of this is to highlight the importance of really understanding what it is that we are reading when we study the biblical text. Even a simple statement of assurance becomes fraught with meaning when we truly understand each word's importance within it. The Bible is inspired by God- each and every word of it, 1Corinthians 2:13. Don't take a single word of it for granted! Read them all. Understand them all. Live them all, for each is from God and intended to provide you with *"life and godliness through true knowledge,"* 2Peter 1:3.

(Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at [southportcofc.org](http://southportcofc.org); email to [mrpcstrong@hotmail.com](mailto:mrpcstrong@hotmail.com))