

"The Holy Spirit illuminates the minds of people, makes us yearn for God, and takes spiritual truth and makes it understandable to us."

- Billy Graham

John 16 is the last of three full chapters which contain Jesus' parting words to his disciples. Throughout his conversation, Jesus made several references to the Holy Spirit, who he refers to as *the Spirit of truth* and *the Advocate*. In our reading today, Jesus spends much more time focusing on explaining who the Holy Spirit is and what his role is in the lives of those who follow Jesus.

The person and work of the Holy Spirit can be confusing and difficult to understand, both for people who are new to faith and for those who have been a part of the church for a long time. The words of Jesus in this chapter provide us with some important truths about the Holy Spirit and how he works in our lives.

- 1. The Holy Spirit empowers us to do what we could never do on our own (John 16:7).** Jesus explains that he is going to send his very presence to live in us and enable us with supernatural power to continue his mission in the world.
- 2. The Holy Spirit exposes sin and self-righteousness (John 16:8-11).** A primary role of the Holy Spirit in our lives is both to make us aware of the areas in which we are falling short of the life God has intended for us. He also exposes our attempts to earn God's favor by our good and moral actions as opposed to by his grace.
- 3. The Holy Spirit guides us into truth (John 16:13-14).** As we go through our lives following Jesus, the Holy Spirit provides peace to our hearts, by a continual awareness of the grace of Jesus and his love for us.

The presence of God that was once only accessible to a select few would now become available to all, as close as our very heartbeat. What an incredible, beautiful gift. Just like the disciples, we today have the opportunity to partner with Jesus in carrying out his mission in the world, guided and upheld by the Holy Spirit.

READ

John 16

REFLECT

1: What aspects of the Holy Spirit would you like to understand better?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2: When have you experienced the Holy Spirit convicting you of sin or guiding you into truth?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3: When has the Holy Spirit helped you to accomplish something you could never have done on your own? (For example: showing love to a difficult person, giving even when your own resources were low, sharing your faith with someone, etc.)

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

"I don't think brothers and sisters in the kingdom of God should fight. I think that's bad family manners." - Eugene Peterson

A person's last words say a lot about what they value most. Jesus chose to end his time with his closest friends by praying. In this final prayer, Jesus prays for three things: glory from God, protection for his disciples and solidarity in the church that would one day exist as a result of their message.

Glory. It was the common belief of the Jewish people that when the Messiah arrived, he would be a political leader who would establish a kingdom on earth. Jesus prayed that he would receive honor and praise from his Father; but it would not be through the path of political leadership and public acclaim. The life and death of Jesus reveals that God's love is most visible in laying down our lives for one another.

Disciples. The words that Jesus prays over his disciples reflect his deep love for them as well as his great confidence in their ability to continue to carry out his mission following his death. Here, we see that Jesus prays for their protection, but also that they would continue to boldly engage people that are deeply broken, hurting and in need of healing, purpose, value and meaning in their lives.

The Church. It is mind-blowing to think that Jesus prayed for us before he died. It says so much about the heart of God that his primary desire for the church of the future is that we would be unified. When the global church exists in harmony and solidarity, it has the capacity to engage the world with much more power than a church who can't seem to get past its disagreements.

These words can provide us with so much guidance and direction today. When we serve without recognition, welcome those who are difficult to love and put the needs and desires of others above our own, we become the presence of God to others. We are still called to boldly love and mesh our lives with the spiritually searching and the wounded. And, more than ever, the power and love of God can be clearly seen in the church who joins hands with one another to carry on the mission of Jesus in this world.

READ

John 17

REFLECT

1: How can you honor God in your life by valuing others above yourself?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2: Which of Jesus' requests for his disciples seems especially significant to you? Why?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3: How does it impact you to know that Jesus prayed for you before he died?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

RESPOND

As we consider the emphasis Jesus places upon unity within the church, we are going to spend some extra time looking at what it means to be in relationship with one another as a church community.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul refers to the church as the body of Christ. We all have different strengths and function best when we work together. The practice of community involves intentionally investing in relationships within the church that help us sustain one another's faith through the ups and downs of life.

This week, choose one of the following "one another" verses from the Bible to practice this week. Share your experience with your small group. This is also a great week to include the whole family if you have children!

Love One Another

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. (John 13:34-35)

Encourage One Another

"But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'Today,' so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." (Hebrews 3:13)

Bear One Another's Burdens

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2)

Forgive One Another

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." (Ephesians 4:32)

Honor One Another

"Honor one another above yourselves." (Romans 12:10)

Do Not Compete/Envy One Another

"Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another." (Galatians 5:26)

WEEK SIX

DAY THREE

“At the cross we see the worst that sin can do, as humanity—of which each one of us is a part—crucified the Lord. But at the cross, we also see that the most that sin can do cannot thwart God’s salvation .” - Timothy Keller

Two of the most pivotal events in the Christian faith occur in a garden. The first is found in the opening pages of the Bible in the Garden of Eden. In this original garden, the first humans ever created, Adam and Eve, lived in a perfect harmonious relationship with God and all of creation. In what seems like an instant, they disobey God and lose it all. Every one of us has followed in their footsteps ever since.

In today’s reading, we find ourselves in another garden—the Garden of Gethsemane. In the midst of betrayal at the hands of individuals he had shared his life with and public ridicule from the crowds who, only days before had been celebrating and praising him—Jesus was in full control. He was not the victim of personal disloyalty or political injustice; he was taking deliberate steps to complete the mission he had come to earth for—to rescue us.

In that first garden, God’s chosen people disobeyed him, bringing death, suffering and disconnection from his presence. In this garden, God’s chosen person would obey and bring life, redemption and reconciliation with God. In the first garden, Adam and Eve were hiding and lost. Jesus entered the Garden of Gethsemane with the intent to be found.

The message of the Bible has always been that God has initiated a relationship with us by his grace. We are constantly unfaithful, falling short of the life that God has called us to. The story of the Garden of Eden is each of our stories. We have all incurred a great debt before a perfect God that we could never begin to repay. And yet, instead of requiring us to drink the cup of wrath that we deserve for failing to live up to his standard, Jesus drinks it for us.

READ

John 18

REFLECT

1: Skim back through John 18. What events show that Jesus was in total control of what was happening to him?

2: How does it impact you to consider that Jesus made an intentional choice to lay down his life for you?

3: How is the cross a picture of the seriousness and magnitude of the breakdown sin causes in our relationship with God?
