

## Listen

Help Is on the Way  
John 16:4b-15

Zach Cochran

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*I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. <sup>5</sup>But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' <sup>6</sup>But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. <sup>7</sup>Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. <sup>8</sup>And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: <sup>9</sup>concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; <sup>10</sup>concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; <sup>11</sup>concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. <sup>12</sup>"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup>When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. <sup>14</sup>He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. <sup>15</sup>All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*

I was privileged to grow up in an incredible home. I had the joy of being in a boy family and my brothers and I are best friends. We are still in a text group arguing literally every day about sports. Kaitlyn, my wife, can tell you how much of a boy family I grew up in simply based on our first year of marriage. In spite of all the greatness of my family though, I am still working through the trauma of something I experienced. I believe some of you most likely went through this very thing. Around 20-25 percent of us had this condition as a child, being a middle child.<sup>1</sup> Anybody else a middle child in the room? Being a middle child has a significant impact on one's life. For you "non-middle child" folk in here, let me give you an insight into the horror of our youth:

1. We never got to open our presents first at Christmas - Parents at least try to mix it up. They will let the oldest go first, they will let the youngest go first, but do the middle children get to go first? No! Never.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://familyinequality.wordpress.com/2018/07/23/are-middle-children-going-extinct/>

2. We always got referred to as our older sibling's little brother or sister - Most people didn't even know our name. We were "Curt's little brother" or "The younger Cochran." It is like we didn't have our own identity.
3. We were blamed for everything - The older child was absolutely perfect; the youngest was a hot mess—but he was the baby, and—at least in my family—my parents' arms were tired from punishing me. Now, I was rightly punished most of the time. I wasn't the best child. But it got to the point where when someone would cry, or glass would break, my dad wouldn't even go to the scene of the crime. He'd go looking for me.

I mostly joke, but I would say that we often treat the Holy Spirit as the middle child of the Holy Trinity. Of course, we know he exists. We know he has a purpose and we know he is at work, but we struggle to identify him. As I see it:

1. We often don't give him recognition for his work in our life or the world
2. We don't even know what to call him. Is the Spirit, an "it" or a "he"?
3. Often, in our particular tribe of Christianity, we only talk about him when someone is doing something wrong.

Of course, we don't intend to do this. It is mostly due to our theological education, the theology tribe we have been around, and a general wariness because the Holy Spirit seems so vague. He is not something we can touch or speak to, so we don't know what to do. I believe our text today helps us tremendously.

My hope this morning is to answer three questions: (1) who is the Holy Spirit? (2) What does he do? (3) How do we live with him?

### **Who Is the Holy Spirit?**

Let's take a look at verses 4b-7 of this morning's text—paying close attention to verse 7. Here, Jesus speaks about the Spirit, saying:

*I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. <sup>5</sup> But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' <sup>6</sup> But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. <sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.*

Here is what is happening in the book of John. John is giving us a story of Jesus's life. In these chapters, he is having this meal with them and equipping them for this next stage of ministry. Our next section is the last time Jesus teaches his disciples before his death. Last week, we learned that he informed them that they would suffer. In our text today, he informs them that he is going back to "him who sent me."

Can you imagine hearing this? The disciples had seen Jesus do the incredible—he healed the sick, raised the dead, fed thousands with a Lunchable. How in the world would it be better if he were gone? The reason Jesus should leave is because of someone who is coming. Who is it? The Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is referenced throughout the book of John. John uses the word "Helper" and the "Spirit" interchangeably, and this concept of Jesus leaving, and the Spirit coming is not new to the book of John.

*Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, **because Jesus was not yet glorified** (John 7:39).*

Jesus knows that the disciples would be full of sorrow because this man—this friend, this king, this teacher of whom they have devoutly followed for three years—is leaving, and he knew they would not know how to take it. And they didn't! They all bailed on him when he died. They still weren't ready. Even after he taught them, they didn't understand and had to be reminded of God's redemptive plan.

We see in verse 5 that Jesus is teaching us that somebody **sent** him. Who is that? Well, it is God the Father. Jesus mentions this a few times in his teachings:

- *"For God so loved the world, **that he gave his only Son**" (John 3:16).*
- *"Jesus said to them, 'My food is to **do the will of him who sent me** and to accomplish his work'" (John 4:34).*
- *"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, **because I am going to the Father**" (John 14:12)*

Since the beginning, Christians have believed that God is one being and three persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three are equal in essence and value but distinct in person and role. If that doesn't make complete sense to you, that is okay! People around you have been Christians for years and still can't comprehend it. If you want to understand it more, google "St. Patrick Trinity" and thank me later.

We see in verse 7 that just as God the Father sent Jesus, Jesus is sending the Holy Spirit. It is as if Jesus was "tagging the Holy Spirit in" to accomplish the rest of the mission of redemption. This is why Jesus tells the disciples to wait in Acts 1. They could not reach anyone without the Spirit.

So, is the Spirit strictly a power that God sends down? What is he? Who is he?

The Holy Spirit is equal in power and essence to the Father and the Son, and he is essential to the completion of God's mission. He is not the magic power of God. He **is** God. He is a person. He has character. He is not merely a force, like that of Star Wars. This is hard because he doesn't seem touchable or tangible. It is like he's just "out there" or a power we tap into. But the Holy Spirit is as real as Jesus and the Father. He has existed from eternities past without beginning, he is with us now, and will be forever.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Frame, John M. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey, P & R Publishing, 2013, pp. 477–482.

Not only does Jesus say that the Holy Spirit is a person equal to him. Jesus also says that the Holy Spirit should be with us rather than him. One pastor summarized this passage like this: "It is better to have the Holy Spirit in us than Jesus beside us."<sup>3</sup> If the Holy Spirit is equal in worth, power, and value then we probably need to figure what he does, right?

### What Does the Holy Spirit Do?

First, we need to understand that the Holy Spirit convicts. Let's look at verses 8-11:

*<sup>8</sup> And when he comes, **he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:** <sup>9</sup> concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; <sup>10</sup> concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; <sup>11</sup> concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."*

One of the primary ways the Holy Spirit works in the world is through the conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He works similar to a doctor—the one who gives the diagnosis and the one who heals. As you very well know, the world is full of brokenness and sin, and that includes our brokenness and our sin. Yet, if Jesus would have just died for our sins, this text tells us that it would not be enough to redeem the world. We still needed to be woken from our sinful state.

This is the gospel. Jesus entered our world because sin had broken it and the people that live in it. Humanity had turned its face from the reign and rule of God; people lived for themselves. Therefore, Jesus came to us as a child, lived a perfect life, died on the cross to take the punishment for sin on our behalf, and then rose on the third day declare victory over sin, Satan, and death. But his grace did not stop at Calvary. Because if God's grace stopped at Calvary, we would not be gathered here today. God did not do his gig and leave us to figure the rest out. For parents in the room, let me put it this way: God did not set the dinner table and hope that the kids would simply come down for dinner. No, God did not just leave because if it were up to us, we would still be living according to the way of the world and its ruler (Eph. 2:4-5).

As I've heard it said by one pastor, "**Jesus bought the house, but the Spirit turned the lights on.**"<sup>4</sup> That means that when we become as Christians, it wasn't because we "found Jesus." I understand what people mean when they say that, but the fact of the matter is that Jesus was never lost, we were. Jesus sent his Spirit after us. He makes us aware of our darkness and empowers us toward godliness.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit guides us to the truth. Take a look at verses 12-13. Here, Jesus says:

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<sup>3</sup> Greear, J.D, and Trevin Wax. *Jesus Continued Why the Spirit Inside You Is Better Than Jesus Beside You*. Lifeway Christian Resources, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Quote from Barry Cox, pastor in Jackson, TN.

*I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup> When the Spirit of truth comes, **he will guide you into all the truth**, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come."*

Jesus is teaching the disciples that there are truths they are not able to understand but that the Spirit would lead them to know when he arrived. This is why most of the disciples seem like they don't understand anything during Jesus's life, and then in the book of Acts, they seem to suddenly understand God's redemptive plan and can communicate it to the masses. How is that? The Spirit's illuminating power.

That is why you can understand the Bible. The Word is not just a textbook. The author of this book lives inside of you if you are in Christ. God wants to show you the amazing truths of the Bible. That means, teenagers: You can understand the depths of God's truth. It is not based upon your intellectual ability. It is not based upon your GPA or the grade you are in. Your understanding is based completely on the Spirit's illuminating power. This also means that you can never be prideful of how much you know about God and his Word. The Spirit shows each person what they understand, and you get to credit him for it.

Our understanding of God is one hundred percent grace. The Holy Spirit is the lamp unto our feet in the world, declaring God's glory to us. We must understand that the mind cannot know what the Spirit does not show.

This text then tells us the goal of the Holy Spirit. That is: he glorifies Jesus. "He will *glorify me*, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:14).

The Holy Spirit's primary aim is to glorify Jesus! He wants to do a work in you and through you for the sake of making much of Jesus. The Spirit is not interested in showing off or getting credit. We must understand that Jesus aimed to display and achieve the Father's plan for redemption, and therefore, the Holy Spirit's purpose is to glorify God by shining a light on the work of Jesus (i.e. the gospel). That means that the Spirit's work and the gospel being proclaimed and enjoyed are directly connected.

That is why the Holy Spirit and the Church are so closely linked. The Spirit's mission and the Church's mission are one and the same: making much of Jesus through declaring the gospel. That is why the Spirit grants spiritual gifts to all of us in Christ to use for the purpose of making much Jesus. The Spirit gives no gifts for the purpose of self-fulfillment. This aim helps us see the framework for everything we do in life, especially as a church. The Spirit is seeking to mold our hearts to adore Jesus.

So, who is the Holy Spirit? He is the third person of the Trinity sent by the Father and the Son to accomplish all the Father planned and all the Son achieved.

What does he do? He convicts the world, he guides his people, and he glorifies Jesus.

**How Do We Live With Him?**

Ephesians tells us to "be filled with the Spirit." Galatians says, "walk by the Spirit" and "walk in step with the Spirit." The hard part is understanding what that looks like. What does it mean to live in the Spirit? I want to leave you with these encouragements:

## **1. Fall in love with Jesus**

Jl Packer has said, "I like to think of the Holy Spirit as shy."<sup>5</sup> We don't walk in step in the Spirit by looking to love the Holy Spirit, but by falling in love with Jesus. Whenever you fall deeper in love with Jesus, that means the Spirit is at work. This is why becoming a Christian is more than a profession of knowledge and understanding. It is an experience. Friend, if your affections haven't changed since you started calling yourself a Christian, then I would plead with you to ask yourself if you have truly experienced the life change of the gospel. The Spirit must be in us for us to fall in love with Jesus. He can't make us like Jesus unless he made us alive.

How do you fall more in love with Jesus? A simple step is to commit fully to Sunday morning worship (Eph. 5:19). I don't know about you, but my heart wanders throughout the week, and I work at a church. I don't skip to work every morning in love with Jesus, believe it or not. I need this breath of gospel grace on Sunday morning. That's why Sunday mornings are so important; we gather on Sunday morning to stir each other's affections toward Jesus. We sing, we pray, we preach, we take communion, and we baptize because we want more of Jesus! That is why Christ established the church. That means we can't just show up, and that means we have to be honest with the Lord when we do. We don't come to church because God will love us more.

Ask yourself these questions:

- How are you drawing near to Jesus to fall more love with him? Are you in the Word? In prayer? In community?
- When you gather on the Lord's day, are you engaging in worship and teaching in a way that affects your heart? Or are you coming because it is what you are supposed to do?

## **2. Respond to his leading**

One of the ways we fall more in love with Jesus is by following his lead with our lives. The Holy Spirit wants to guide our lives toward wholeness, and we must respond to his leading.

We must respond when he convicts us of sin. Jesus hates sin. That is why he died for it. The Holy Spirit aims to glorify Jesus by making you more like Jesus. One of the primary ways he does that is by convicting you when you are in sin. If you are a follower of Jesus, you have experienced this, right? You have felt that weight when you have done something wrong and know without a doubt that you need to repent. Something that is required for us to live this way is to give people in our lives

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBz8hJoeu0A>

permission to be honest with us. The Holy Spirit does not just work internally in you. He works through the people he has placed in our lives. The question is: have you given anyone those keys? Have you committed to gospel relationships that will tell you things you don't want to hear?

Maybe you are here, and you have yet to genuinely put your faith in Jesus. You have been playing the part: you own a Bible, you come to church, and you know the right things to say, yet your desires haven't changed. Maybe you are feeling that nudge from the Spirit. Today is the day of your salvation. Turn from your own desires and lordship and place your trust in a king who loves you more than anyone who has ever existed.

We must respond to his guidance toward truth. The Spirit does not just convict us. He guides us toward truth. We will not live in the Spirit without being his Word and in prayer. The Word retells a true story that is being untold to us throughout the week. We must allow the Spirit to guide us through his Scriptures. The Spirit also connects with you through prayer. He tells you to ask him for guidance.

So, we ought plea to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit so that we can be unique in God's presence. This text does not say that the Scripture guides us in just biblical truth but *all* truth. I must be honest—this is the area where many of us get uncomfortable. Some of us grew up in a church where the Holy Spirit only led people to get saved, but then he retired. So when we begin talking about the Spirit leading and prompting us, we get uncomfortable. We may get even more uncomfortable when hearing things like "listening to the Holy Spirit." However, this text is clear that the Spirit guides us toward truth. The Spirit is working in your life and wants to direct you toward a life of godliness, not simply a lack of sinfulness.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Are you quick to respond when you know you have sinned?
- Do people in your life have the keys to be honest with you?
- Are you removing busyness and distractions so that you can hear from the Lord?

### **3. Live with overwhelming optimism**

Do you remember why Jesus is teaching them about what is to come? They are troubled. Jesus just told them that they were going to suffer and that he was going away. They are scared. They are losing hope. They thought Jesus was going to restore the Kingdom. They didn't know they signed up for this. Fear could have easily controlled them. That is why Jesus had to help them understand the power of the Holy Spirit.

Sound familiar? Sure, we might not be beheaded for our faith, but fear is real—our fear about the state of our culture, governmental decisions, personal finances, our kids, our relationship status, and

I could go on. As I seek to imperfectly pastor our students, the regular drum I try to so-passionately beat is that God is bigger than our fears. Because their world is terrifying.

Therefore, our optimism is not this stirring up of personal courage. Our optimism is faith in a God who is bigger than all of our fear. He is not only bigger but he is active and he is working in the world. God is never just chillin'. He is relentlessly unfolding God's redemptive purposes. God the Father planned your life, Jesus entered our world and purchased your life, and the Spirit gave you your life. So, brother and sister, God's got you, and I don't know if you know this or not, but God does not lose.

## **Conclusion**

This doesn't just apply to your faith and your family's faith; it applies to the co-worker, friend, family member, and neighbor who you are sharing with, hoping they will put their faith in Jesus. God wants them to know himself way more than you do.

This is the story of the Spirit and the mission. See, I can remember when I was involved in college ministry. The Lord burdened me with seven particular friends who didn't know him—some whom I was particularly close with. I would share the gospel with them, but I continued to gain zero traction. Still, before one of our retreats, I invited several people, including those particular seven, and those seven accepted. I can vividly remember how the speaker would end each session with a public invitation to trust Christ. And after one of the sessions, the only people in the room to stand in response were those seven people I had been praying for. I remember how emotional I was because of how much I had longed for God to save these friends of mine and how hopeless I had gotten. It was like the Spirit himself spoke to me in that moment: "no prayer is wasted, no effort is worthless, and I am at work no matter whether or not you can see me."

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do you find yourself become hopeless about circumstances?
- Are you seeing a trend of manipulating and manufacturing circumstances to get your desired results?
- Are you confidently sharing the gospel with those around you, knowing that God is more eager to save them than you are?

Imagine if, in 2020, College Park Church became the church known for people who were annoyingly optimistic because of our trust in Christ's work through his Spirit in the world. I can assure you that "out there" optimism will not be the trending theme. And maybe. . . just maybe. . . people seeking hope in a chaotic and confusing world would come through our doors and experience a God who loves them and people who care about them. Jesus, make it so.



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