



St. John's Wimborne
New Life, Full Life

Home Growth Group Notes

Autumn 2024



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Bible Studies for Autumn 2024

The Holy Spirit in John 13-16

Who is the Holy Spirit?

He is the Lord and giver of life, the third person of the Trinity to be worshipped and glorified with the Father and the Son. He is most commonly presented to us as the executor of God's purposes, whether in creation, revelation, or salvation. The Holy Spirit is unique.

There is but one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13, Ephesians 4:4). His intercession (praying) is according to the will of God. (Romans 8:27). To outrage the Spirit is to draw down a rigorous punishment. (Hebrews 10:29) The scriptures are inspired by the Spirit. The scriptures themselves speak of Him. The Holy Spirit compelled the prophets to speak God's inspired word to men so as to prophesy and reveal to the apostles and prophets the truth concerning Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 3:5-6) We will also see that the Holy Spirit was at work in the incarnation of Jesus. The Bible reminds us also of how the Holy Spirit was behind the conception of Jesus. Repeatedly across Luke's gospel, we see the work and power of the Holy Spirit. (Luke 1:35) The Holy Spirit also led and directed Jesus Christ during his ministry. (Matthew 4:1) In chapters 14-16 in John's gospel Jesus does some extensive teaching about the Holy Spirit.

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Peter Breckwoldt

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Bible Study 1

Everyone Will Know You Are My Disciples **John 13:21-38** **P8**

Bible Study 2

A time of Questions **John14:1-14** **P11**

Bible Study 3

The Holy Spirit **John 14:15-31** **P16**

Bible Study 4

Fruitful Living for Jesus **John 15:1-17** **P20**

Bible Study 5

Witnessing and the World **John 15:18-25** **P24**

Bible Study 6

Who is the Holy Spirit? **John 15:26 - 16:16** **P28**

GROUP BIBLE STUDY

The priority of any Bible study is to seek to understand what the Bible is saying to the people to whom it was first written as well as to understand it for our particular day and generation. So, the top priority is first to understand the text and then to make it meaningful and relevant. Here are some pointers to help you as you study the Bible:

PRAY

Our preparation for any Bible study should begin and end with prayer. We need to ask God, through the help of the Holy Spirit, to guide us as we read the Bible and prepare for a study.

ASK

In order to understand the Bible properly, we need to keep in mind six important questions:

- 1. Who is speaking?** Everything in the Bible was written by men who were inspired by God. Though God inspired every writer of the Bible, sometimes the writers record words which come from the hearts of evil men. So, dealing with the question “Who is speaking?” will help us to know whether the words we are reading are words that we should obey today.
- 2. Who is spoken to?** We need to realise that not every command that comes in the Bible is a command for us today. For example, the command by God to Noah to build an ark is obviously pertinent and relevant for Noah, but not for us.
- 3. When is the Bible writer speaking?** In answering this question, we will need to make a distinction between those who are living under the law and those who live under the guidelines and principles as outlined to us in the New Testament, the way of Christ. Therefore, the principles we see with regards to worship in the Old Testament have a relevance to us, but we need to read them in the light of the New Testament. It is always important to bear in mind that one part of the Bible can often help us to understand another part.
- 4. What type of language is the writer using?** The languages used are usually one of two types: either literal or figurative. Sometimes both will be mixed together in one passage – for example, Jesus is spoken of as the Lamb of God, which is clearly a figurative form of speech. However, he is also described as the one who takes away the sin of the world, which is true for those who believe. So, Jesus was not an actual lamb, but he was the one who became the offering for our sins.

5. What are the conditions or circumstances in which this writing is given? If we can get to grips with the particular circumstances the writer is facing when he writes, it helps us to understand what he is saying.

6. What is the context of the Bible passage? Think about what has just been said and what is about to be said in the particular book of the Bible as well as the context of the Bible passage within the whole of the Bible. The Bible is indeed God's inspired word – it is his revelation to all humanity. So, in order for us to understand the Bible we must seek to study it properly. Only then can we “correctly handle the word of truth”. And if we keep these six simple questions in mind as we prepare our study, we will find that we can indeed get to grips with God's word.

PLAN

For those who are preparing and leading a study, the following steps should prove helpful:

1. Try to break the passage into parts or sections so that you can clearly divide up the passage you are looking at.
2. Think about what you do not understand in the passage and therefore what others might not understand as well. About which parts do you need to gain more background and information? Be prepared and ready to deal with questions that people have regarding the passage. So, for example, when studying John 3, people might ask ‘What is the kingdom of God?’, ‘What is a Pharisee?’. These are some of the obvious things where your group might need more information from you.
3. Having broken the passage up into sections, we can then think about questions. You can use the questions that are in this book. However, you may want to write your own, which is of course perfectly all right. Questions can be one of three types:
 - A. Understanding.** The first type of question should be aimed at trying to draw out our understanding of what the passage is saying.
 - B. Significance.** Only once we have begun to understand the passage can we move on to questions that try to highlight the significance of the passage in the light of the particular book or letter, and, of course, against the backdrop of the whole Bible.
 - C. Application.** Then we move on to questions which apply to the situations we are facing today.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- Do make use of clergy and commentaries and other Christians who have a maturity which you can rely upon when you are seeking to tackle Bible passages. • It will sometimes prove helpful to have more than one translation as this will give you some fresh insights into the verses on which you are focusing.
- As we come to study the Bible, we need to keep in mind that all the books of the Bible have one great theme: that is God's plan to save mankind from his sins through Jesus Christ.
- Fundamentally, make sure that whatever you do, you seek to do it to honour and glorify God.

Introduction

This term our focus will be on the work of the Holy Spirit as revealed to us by Jesus in John's gospel. Our Bible studies will link us to the Farewell Discourse, which is the name often given to John's passage in 13:31 – 16:33. So this passage will be the heart of our studies this term together, and I hope we will see that it is a very important one for understanding this important topic of the work of God the Holy Spirit.

The work and person of the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel is grounded in the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit is the One who convicts of sin, glorifies the person of Jesus and changes believers into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit convicts people of their selfishness and sin and points them towards Jesus in order that they may, with assurance, "draw near to the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). This series of studies explores the person and work of the Holy Spirit, who acts sovereignly to give life and indwells and teaches God's people in order to deepen their understanding of the work of Jesus. If you like, the Holy Spirit is the spotlight that focuses our attention on Jesus, the hero of the Bible's story. The Holy Spirit is the one who commissions God's people so as to send them out to speak about the glory of Jesus. John, in the pages of his gospel, has deliberately shown a view of the Holy Spirit that is relational, personal, and intimate. The Holy Spirit longs to breathe new life into those who come to Jesus. He also longs to set them apart for Jesus by his Word and by washing them with the sanctifying power of the Word of God.

In these studies, you will find small boxes unpacking a little bit more about the Holy Spirit and his Ministry among the local Church. It is exciting to see that the Holy Spirit is a promise of Jesus fulfilled to bless and strengthen the local church for both mission and ministry.

A Breakdown of John's Gospel

Seven Signs (Miracles) to the Public	Intimate Signs to His Disciples
Water to Wine 2:1-11	The Anointing 12
Nobleman's Son 4:46-54	The Passover 13
Powerless Man 5:1-47	The Farewell Discourse 14-16
Feeding the 5000 6:1-14	Christ's Prayer 17
Walking on Water 6:15-21	Gethsemane 18
The Blind Man 9:1-41	Jesus' Suffering the Trial & Cross 19
Raising Lazarus 11:1-57	Christ's Resurrection 20
	Christ's Appearing to the Disciples 20-21

Bible Study 1

People Will Know You Are My Disciples - John 13: 21-38

The scene is the upper room. Jesus has finished washing the feet of the disciples. In v21 Jesus says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” Jesus is emotional, as a close companion is his betrayer. This is a tough time. Only Judas knows the truth.

Peter wants to know who the betrayer is. He asks the disciple whom Jesus loved to find out. John then asks, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus answers that it is the one to whom he gives the bread. Jesus then passes the bread to Judas. This is also a moment of love toward Judas. However, Judas is unmoved. So, Jesus says to Judas, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” No one knows why he leaves. Satan has put the temptation into his heart to betray Jesus. Judas goes off to betray the Lord. Here is evil at work, “And it was night” (v30). Now is the hour. The events are set in motion.

<p>The Personhood of the Holy Spirit</p> <p>The Holy Spirit is a person not simply an influence, or power, or force. The Holy Spirit has spoken, and he is referred to as ‘He’ and not ‘it’. John 16v13 The Holy Spirit is spoken of as a person. He is the Comforter or Advocate. John 14 v16 and v26. He may be grieved. Isaiah 63v10 Eph 4v 30. The Holy Spirit is outraged by apostasy. Heb. 10v 29. Yes, blasphemy against him is the worst of all sins. Matt 12v31 and Luke 12v10.</p>	<p>The Time of God’s Glory (13:31-33)</p> <p>Jesus’s life was all about God’s glory. Here is perfect obedience and the perfect revelation of the Father. Jesus saw his death in terms of pointing to the Father in the power of the Spirit. Jesus will pay the price. Five times Jesus says “glorify” or “glorified.” Remember what the apostle Paul said in Ephesians. We are to be the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:12). How can God be glorified in our lives? John focuses on one way.</p>
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All People Will Know That You Are My Disciples (v34-35)

The Holy Spirit is sometimes spoken of as the love that flows between the Father and the Son. Jesus now gives a new commandment. The command to love one another. But it is not new. See Lev.19:18, “Love your neighbour as yourself.” But there is more for we are to: “Love one another, just as I have loved you.” Christ’s love shows us the new basis for love. We are to

reveal this love in action. In v34 Jesus says, “Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.” This is the new standard.

In v35 we see this kind of love is the mark of discipleship. Love will be how all people will know we are Jesus’ disciples. Love for others reflects our new status. Love is giving ourselves. God is glorified when we love others like Jesus loved us.

The biggest criticism of Christians is that we do not show love each other. Remember it is loving to warn people if they face being cut off from God. The Holy Spirit, both points us to Jesus but also shows us our need of Jesus.

Is our love marked by self-sacrificing love? Is this seen in marriages? Is this the love that spouses show to each other? In family life, how do we display love both parents and children? Are we aiming for each other’s best interests? In church, when we come together submitting to and serving each other shows the world that we are disciples of Jesus. Jesus showed this love in the Upper Room with His disciples and Judas. This love is also seen by how we live with all people.

The Holy Spirit wants you to be his ambassador. The Spirit of Jesus says that the goal is to let all people know that we are His disciples.

Pursuing Jesus v36-38

Peter takes hold of something Jesus says. Jesus said, “Where I am going you cannot come” (13:33). Peter asks where Jesus is going. Jesus tells them that they cannot follow Jesus now, but afterward they will follow him. Peter is perceptive about what Jesus is saying. Peter responds in verse 37. “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” Peter understands what following Jesus now means. Peter says he will go to death for Jesus. Jesus has said that these disciples cannot follow him now, but they will follow him in this manner later. They will not give their lives now for Jesus. But they will later, after the resurrection. Peter is going to deny Jesus now but will follow Jesus to his death in the future. Here is the point: the disciples were not ready yet to follow Jesus all the way.

Conclusion

All people will know we are disciples of Jesus when we go all the way in self-denial. This is the only way to love. This is the love Jesus showed us. This is the love that is the new commandment. This kind of love is only possible with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Bible Study 1 Questions

Everyone Will Know You Are My Disciples - John 13: 21-38

Q1. What image do you most associate with the Holy Spirit – dove? fire? wind? something else? Why is that image helpful?

Q2. How does Jesus in this Upper Room evening show God's total sovereignty in handling what happens as the story develops? Look carefully at the following verses and note what they show?

v18

v21

v26 & 27

Q3. Where and how will God's glory be most plainly shown (v31-32)?

Q4. Reflecting on God's glory (v31-32) in what way is this different to the way we normally think about glory?

Q5. Jesus knew about both Judas betrayal and Peter's denial. How does this make his earlier foot washing even more powerful and special?

Q6. In v34-35 we are called upon to love one another. How do we show this in the life of a local church and believer in the 21st century?

Q7. How might the Holy Spirit help us to love, serve and strengthen the church today? In what ways is the Holy Spirit helping us to grow in our faith even in tough times?

Bible Study 2

A Time of Questions – John 14:1-14

Jesus's Question v1-4

Right from the start, we see that Jesus is concerned for his followers. In a sense they should have been supporting him because back in chapter 13 Jesus had been looking for their support. Remember what He has said so far during dinner (chapter 13) ... He is going away, He is going to die, one of the twelve is a traitor, Peter will disown Him 3 times, Satan is at work against all of them, and the disciples will fall away. At the start of chapter 14, notice the immediate context when he says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me." He is saying, "You need to know, firstly, that I'm going to prepare a place for you; secondly, I'm going to come back for you; thirdly, you actually know the way to where I'm going, because I've already told you that I am going to the cross. I have told you on a number of occasions. Whether you have registered it or not you need to know that I am going via the way of the cross."

The Holy Spirit and the Trinity

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. He is one with the Father and the Son, Matt 28:19. He is sent from both the Father and the Son. John 15:26. He was an agent of God during the first creation. He was active in creation bringing order out of chaos Gen 1:2. By God's Holy Spirit the heavens were made beautiful Job 26:13. Man was made by the Spirit of God. Job 33:4 The Holy Spirit is the author of the new birth. John 3:5-6

The reason Jesus is doing all of this is because he wants them to understand that as they face the prospect of his death, they need to know that it will not be the end. Jesus loves them so much that he is working for their future. He is telling them that He will send them 'the Comforter,' the Holy Spirit. This is not the end. In fact, it is just the start of the whole story of Jesus. His death is not going to mean that everything is going to come to a crashing halt.

There is a scene in the film "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel" where the Hotel manager is confronted by a lady at the front desk. She is keen to let the owner know that nothing works. The air conditioning does not work. The door does not lock. She has a complete list of things. The young man looks at her and says, "We have a saying in India: 'Everything will be all right in the

end. And if everything is not all right, it is not the end.’” This is what Jesus is saying. They do not get it. But it is going to be all right in the end.

Thomas’s Question v5

Thomas, then asks a question. We should be pleased that there are people like Thomas, people who ask questions that we secretly would like to ask. We are embarrassed that we do not know the answer. Thomas asks Jesus after he said, “And you know the way to where I’m going.” Thomas asks,

“Lord, I am speaking for all the disciples: we do not know where you are going. And how can we know the way?”

Thank God for Thomas. It is his question that gives us v6. v6 is one of the great verses in the Bible. Jesus said, *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. [And] no one comes to the Father except through me.”* It was Thomas’s question, which gave rise to this amazing answer from the lips of Jesus.

Philip’s Question v8

What does Philip’s question in v8 reveal about him? Philip is basing his request on the premise that “seeing is believing.” If they could but see the Father, then they would believe all that Jesus has told them about the Father, and then they could have peace of mind. Jesus is going to turn this reasoning inside-out. He is going to say that it is not “seeing that leads to believing,” but rather it is, “believing that leads to seeing.” It is to those who believe in Jesus to whom He reveals Himself (v21). Christianity is a walk of faith, not a walk of sight.

How can Christians do greater things than Jesus (v12)?

The New Testament gives many occasions when Jesus performs some amazing miracles. Yet we know that not everyone is transformed spiritually. Now I think we would all agree that the saving of a lost person, and seeing them move from death to life, and from darkness to light, is the greatest miracle of all. This is possible because of the power and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Across the Book of Acts we will see this repeatedly. (Acts 2) This miracle took place through the disciples and their preaching. Simply being with Jesus did not lead them to be transformed. What we can say is that during Jesus’ earthly ministry few people believed in Him, but after his ascension everything started to change. When Pentecost comes, the miracle of regeneration increases and the Father sends the Holy Spirit. In Philippi we see different people come to faith

(Acts 16). The church continues to spread across the Roman Empire during the apostolic age whereas Jesus' personal ministry does not extend beyond Palestine. The whole Book of Acts is part of the fulfilling of what Jesus predicted.

What is at the heart of asking in prayer as given in these verses 13-14? Jesus says, "Ask in His name and for the purpose of glorifying God." What does "in His name" mean? It is a lot more than just saying, "In Jesus' name" at the end of a prayer! The key here is to ask in harmony with Jesus' mind and will. This means that when we pray, we are to pray for things which will glorify God, bless humanity, and be for our spiritual good. We are being told to live in the heart of His will. We need to be in step with Him, which means asking for anything the Lord would desire because that should be the desire of our heart.

The goal of answered prayer is to bring glory to God. "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him" (1 John 5:14-15).

Conclusion

The Holy Spirit is like the spotlight at a theatre. The spotlight works to show us the actors on the stage and help us understand the drama. This is the work of the Holy Spirit to show us Jesus. His personality, His words, and His works. The Holy Spirit is showing us that Jesus is God with us.

Bible Study 2 Questions

A Time of Questions - John14:1-14

Q1. Share and reflect with the group, the kind of things and situations that you find distressful? What are some of the remedies for a troubled or distressed heart?

Q2. How does Jesus expect his disciples to be feeling at this time after hearing His unexpected news? (v1-4) What promise does Jesus offer to them to for comfort? (v1&6)

Q3. What will it take for Jesus to prepare a place for you in heaven? (v1-6)

Q4. Jesus, in v6, makes a big claim in response to Thomas's question. What is it? How is Jesus the Way, the Truth and the Life?

Q5. This verse can be controversial in our day (v6). People often say that there are many "pathways" to God. How might you explain to a friend that what Jesus says here is still true today? How do you feel about the exclusivity of Jesus' claims in this passage?

Q6. What does Philip's question in verse 8 reveal about him?

Q7. How do verses 9–11 address Philip's question in verse 8? Can you summarise Jesus' answer.

Q8. How do you understand the words of Jesus' in 14:13-14, in the light of unanswered prayer? How would you explain God's dealing with us in prayer to a member of the Youth Group? Why do some prayers get answered and others do not?

Bible Study 3

The Way of the Holy Spirit - John 14:15-31

This little passage is just packed with good news. The Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are at work in and for us. They are giving us hope and being with us in whatever the circumstances we face.

As the disciples encounter utter bewilderment, Jesus gives them three main reasons to be encouraged:

First, they can expect the Holy Spirit's presence. v15-18. The Holy Spirit is given to us not because we deserve this gift, but because Jesus died and rose again. (Acts 2:23). It is because Jesus asked his Father, that we can receive another Helper (v16). The phrase reminds us that the Spirit is like Jesus because of His power and ability to help us. But while Jesus, in human form, could not stay with his disciples, the Holy Spirit promises never to leave us (v16,18). In this sense the Holy Spirit is positively better according to Jesus (16:7).

Second, they can experience the Father's love. All Christians have the Holy Spirit living in them. (Rom 8:9) He lives in us in a way the world cannot even begin to understand v17. But our experience and enjoyment of the Father's love and presence in our lives has a lot to do with our willingness to be obedient. This was the hallmark of Jesus and His life. The disciples saw this at first hand. (v15, 21, 23, 24). Jesus offers us breathtaking depth in terms of our fellowship with God v23. However, if we choose to go our own way, to turn away from Jesus, we lose the very treasure that we have been offered.

The Life of Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit was involved in the birth of Christ. Luke 1:15, Mathew 1:18-25. The Holy Spirit was involved in the baptism of Christ. Matthew 3:16; John 1:32-34. The Holy Spirit led Christ Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted. Matthew 4:1 He was involved in the ministry of Christ. Luke 4:14-21; 10:21

Third, they can enjoy the Saviour's peace. Christ's peace is not the absence of difficulties and problems, but the active presence of God with us. Yes, we will face

troubled waters. At times it can feel almost overwhelming. However, allow Jesus's words in v27 to sink into our hearts and into the situations that we are facing. What a great passage we have that shows the whole godhead; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit on our side. God in three persons blessed trinity. Now that is encouragement!

His Permanence v16b - When the Spirit of God comes to the heart of the believer, He comes in to stay forever! The Spirit of God will never desert the child of God. He will help us to walk through this wicked, sinful world!

His Purpose v17, 21, 26 - The purposes of the Spirit are many:

1. **To Indwell** v 17 At the moment of salvation, the believer becomes the Temple of God. He takes up permanent residence. He dwells in the life of the believer!
2. **To Invest** v21 The Spirit fills us with power to live and serve the Lord. He is essential for the glory of God. When we partner with the Holy Spirit, just think about what can be accomplished Phil. 4:13.
3. **To Teach** v26 A main purpose of the Holy Spirit is to educate us in the things of God. He is a divine teacher!
4. **To Inspire** v26 The Holy Spirit wraps the comforting arms of God's love and protection around us. We belong to Him. He helps us to press on to the goal of being like Christ.

As John draws chapter 14 to a close, Jesus is once more speaking to the disciples about their troubled hearts. Jesus reminds them that He is still the Prince of Peace and even though He is leaving, they will not lose His peace. Jesus tells them that their world is about to change. He reminds them that they can face it with confidence because His peace is with them. Some promises are just for the disciples, but this peace is for us as well. Our world is uncertain but God's people possess a peace to enable us to live with confidence. The peace we have comes from heaven, therefore it cannot be overthrown by the events of this world. Let us learn to have the peace of Jesus and trust Him. Phil. 4:6-7; Isaiah. 26:3.

This chapter shows us that the Lord Jesus is the great encourager! So, if I do not understand what is happening when everything is going wrong, I can turn to the Spirit of Jesus! He has given us all that we need. We have salvation and peace in our hearts and the gift of the Holy Spirit our comforter. Remember you do not have to face life alone. The Holy Spirit of Jesus will be our helper.

Bible Study 3 Questions

The Way of the Holy Spirit - John14:15-31

Q1. What do the following verses tell us about the Holy Spirit?

v16

v17

v18

v26

Q2. *“True love for God always shows itself in obedience to Him.”* Look at v15, 21, 23-24 and 31 and discuss whether you agree with this statement and discuss why we often disassociate obedience and love. What does verse 15 tell us about who Jesus thinks He is? Hint: see Deuteronomy 6:4-6

Q3. Look at v25-27. What are we told that the Holy Spirit will do? Of course, Jesus is promising this to the Apostles first. Therefore, we can be assured that what they wrote is accurate and dependable. If we want to be a spirit-filled and spirit-led church, what must we focus on?

Q4. What roles and titles are given to the Holy Spirit in this passage? Which of these titles and roles do you most need to benefit from at the moment? Why?

Q5. Why is it significant that the Holy Spirit is described as 'another Counsellor'?

Q6. Why do you think this teaching about the Holy Spirit comes in the context of Jesus talking about loving him and obeying him?

Q7. What might you say to someone in the church family who is confident of their love for Christ, but whose life is not marked by obedience to Jesus' teaching. Such as relationships with money, language, or relationship with their family, or Church family.

Bible Study 4

Fruitful Living for Jesus - John 15:1-17

Introduction

Chapter 14 closes with the words, "Rise, let us go..." Jesus and the disciples are about to leave. In chapter 15 the Lord Jesus uses the beautiful picture of the Vine and its branches to explain the New Life of the believer. Any of us who have gone over to France and seen the vineyards will understand the image. Let us also understand the culture and work of a vineyard.

Our passage paints a picture of how the vine grows, and how it produces fruit. By the end of the chapter 14 Jesus and his disciples have left the upper room and were making their way to the garden. This is the Garden of Gethsemane. Now at the entrance to the Temple on the way to Gethsemane was a large Golden Vine. The Vine was a National symbol of Israel. This significant biblical symbol of the Vine was used to describe the people of God in Ezekiel chapter 15 and 17. The picture develops as Jesus was walking towards Gethsemane when He saw this or another vine and He drew His disciple's attention to it. In a sense it became His visual aid. The passage begins with Jesus powerfully telling His disciples that He is the True Vine.

Holy Spirit is God

In the Bible qualities are ascribed to the Holy Spirit. These qualities are described everywhere to God alone. He is ever present. Ps139. He knows all things 1 Corinthians 2:10. He has all power. Luke 1:35 and Romans 11:8 as well the Rom 8:11. What is more, to lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie to God. Acts 5:5. He is to be obeyed. Gal 5:16-24.

What Jesus means is both clear and shocking. Israel was meant to be the faithful and obedient people of God. But Jesus says that the faithful people of God had been narrowed down to just Jesus himself. He alone had perfectly kept the

Father's commands (14v31). He is the only true Israelite! Israel had traded on her spiritual past and was desperately in need of the caring work of the gardener.

In both the Old Testament, Isaiah 5, and in the time of Jesus, the Vine was the national symbol of Israel (God's people). As we saw in our readings, the Jews believed that the vine was a picture of salvation. But Jesus shocks his

listeners by saying that you need to be in relationship with Him to have salvation and produce fruit.

Christ tells us what God wants from us. In a word, God wants fruit! Fruit is mentioned eight times in this chapter. In the eighth verse Jesus says, “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become (or prove to be) my disciples.” Yes, God wants us to bear fruit. But what kind of fruit are we called to produce? We are called to bear the fruit of Christian character, Christian conduct, and Christian converts! First, God wants us to bear the fruit of Christian character. Galatians 5:22-23 says, “...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” (ESV) These are the qualities of a Christian or Christlike character. Yes, we are called to produce the fruit of Christian character and we are called, to bear the fruit of Christian conduct. Colossians 1:10-11 says we are supposed to “...lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him as (we) bear fruit in every good work.” You see, Christian character produces Christian conduct. If we have the Spirit of Christ living in us, then he will produce Christlike conduct through us. Finally, in addition to Christian character and Christian conduct, we should bear the fruit of Christian converts. People should come to Christ.

Christ’s first disciples knew that they could do nothing apart from having Christ’s presence in their lives. They had been living life with Him for three years, witnessing first-hand His power and authority. They also saw His connection with the Father. The disciples knew that without Christ’s help, guidance, and power, they would be useless to God’s kingdom. This passage shows us our need for help in living the Christian life. Look at Christ’s commands to His disciples: Remain in My love, obey My commands, love each other as I have loved you, bear fruit that will last, and love one another. Not only do we need Him for salvation; but we need Him every minute of every day. Intimacy with Christ through the Holy Spirit is our only hope of fulfilling Christ’s command to remain in His love.

Bible Study 4 Questions

Fruitful Living for Jesus - John 15:1-17

Q1. We often think of the Spirit as “some rather vague nondescript power, not doing very much”; but in the Bible the Spirit is thought of as bringing pulsating active life. How does the picture of the vine in this chapter help us?

Q2. What does it mean that Jesus is the True Vine and God the Father is the Gardener?

Q3. What is meant by each of the parts in this picture in John 15?

- The Vine v1
- The Gardener v1
- The Branches v5
- The Fruit v5-8
- And what more do we learn about the image in v9-17?

Q4. What is the importance of understanding that God the Father prunes us?

Can you describe a time where God has pruned you: What happened? What did you learn? What was the result?

Q5. Thinking about the whole passage, what is our responsibility in relationship to the Vine and Gardener? What does that look like in our day to day lives?

Q6. Read Galatians 5:22-23: How does the Holy Spirit produce the fruit of the Spirit in us and in the life of the Church? Why is it so important to pray for these?

Q7. What are some planned changes you are going to take because of this passage?

Bible Study 5

Witnessing and the World - John 15:18-27

After years of sharing my faith with my family there came a crisis. This produced a spiritual move. Was God was using this tough time? Many of us invite people to services, hoping for a eureka moment. Most times nothing happens. I have run many exploring faith groups. But have only seen a few people come to faith. Others have turned away while others have faced opposition. It is easy to feel defeated! This is why we need God's Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that draws a person to Christ. For this to happen then God, by His Spirit, needs to speak into a heart.

In chapters 14 and 15 John has reminded us of what Jesus taught the apostles. Yet the apostles were still in the dark. Yes, Jesus had said He was going away but they did not understand their role. Jesus knew He would die on a cross and would rise again and go to heaven. He knew that the apostles would be witnesses to the entire world. So, Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to help them and us. In John 14:15-17, Jesus said to the apostles,

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments [which included his command to tell the world about him]. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth.”

The Holy Spirit produces the character of Christ and strengthens the Christian.

The Holy Spirit's purpose is to change the Christian into the Lord's likeness. 2 Corinthians 3:18 the Spirit seeks to produce the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness gentleness and self-control. Galatians 5:22,23 we expect the Holy Spirit to produce these characteristics in the believer so as to strengthen them to become more like Christ. Acts 16:7 Romans 8:9, Gal 4:6. His resources are available to the Christian. Phil 1:19 He upholds the believer Acts 9:31 He gives help in time of trouble. 1 Peter 4:14.

Jesus promised that the Spirit would help the apostles and then us to witness about him. In 14:25-26 the words are just for apostles:

“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”

So, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would help the apostles to remember and understand what He had said. This would lead them to give

us the New Testament. The big question is: “Will anyone believe it?” Now apart from the work of God’s Spirit, they will not!

Surrender and Love 15:9-24 - In these verses Jesus speaks about surrender to Him. Jesus makes clear that our obedience to His word is evidence of our love for Him. Our lips and lifestyle need to match!

The Promise of Love 15:21, 23 – is to those who are obedient to the Lord Jesus and His will for their lives. Therefore, the believer will walk in obedience which is a sign of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit 15:16-18, 26 These verses tell of the coming of the Holy Spirit. We see several truths about Him and His ministry to believers. He is a person v16, 18.

Jesus promised that he would ask the Father to send the "Comforter" (The Holy Spirit). His Title v16 Comforter. He is the one who comes alongside to offer protection and counsel. His Personality v26. Jesus was a Comforter Himself, but the Spirit of God is another Comforter. His Ability v17 – The Holy Spirit shall abide in them. Hence, Jesus has the ability to promise every child of God that He will never leave them nor forsake them, but that He will be with always, Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 28:20.

1. Why we need the Spirit’s work v18-25

Verse 18 reminds us that the words in the Bible were not written directly to us, but to others for us. See now the second promise about the Spirit. This time we see it was originally for the apostles but also to us. Jesus said, “...*but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*” The world here means people in rebellion against God, living as if God was powerless. Everyone takes sides. John says: when it comes to Jesus, you either love him or hate him.

Jesus wants to be first in our lives and not second. If He is not first, we are opposing the rightful King. The world’s reaction is outwardly or indirectly hostile to believers. Jesus was the perfect witness and they killed him!

What Jesus does next is to show us just how sinful is the human heart. In v22 Jesus’s speaks about those who saw and heard him. He says, “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.” The sin Jesus is speaking about is hearing and seeing him and yet rejecting him. It is the human heart that rejects Jesus.

2. What the Spirit has to do v26-27

Look at v26-27, “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness because you have been with me from the beginning.”

“Now you have been with me from the beginning” can only describe the apostles. We witness about Jesus through what the apostles saw and heard. We tell people the apostles’ message. v26 - The promise here applies to the apostles and then to us.

In v27 we read, ***“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness.”***

This is the language of a courtroom. The world system is judge and jury. Jesus is on trial. We witness for Jesus with our Bible, telling again the apostle’s story and we also have the Helper (v26). Without the Holy Spirit our work in the courtroom would be hopeless. But the Spirit can change any heart.

So, as individual Christians and as a church, our job in the witness stand is to talk about the Jesus of the Bible. This is a true partnership! There is one thing that will always go hand in hand with our witness and that is prayer. The heart of prayer is to say to God ‘I can’t; you can; please will you help?’

Bible Study 5 Questions:

Witnessing and the World - John 15:18-27

Q1. Every Sunday people say, 'I already believe in Jesus,' and others say, 'I'm just thinking.' Now stop and think about what it is like to tell others about Jesus. On a gauge between 1 to 10, where 1 is very discouraged and 10 is very encouraged about sharing our faith. Where are you? And why?

Q2. What kind of reaction did the disciples expect from the world? (15:18,16:2) Why? v19-25.

Q3. How can I encourage myself to have a soft heart towards those who deny my faith in Christ (15:19–22)? What should a believer keep in mind when others deride them? How does it feel when people ridicule you because of your Christian witness (15:23–25)?

Q4. In v18-25 we see Jesus explore how our broader culture might think about Christians. What reactions should Christians expect in their lives? What encouragement does Jesus give here?

Q5. Why do we believe that the Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force or power, but a Person? (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13a) What kind of activities that we attribute to persons does the Holy Spirit do?

Q6. Jesus focuses again on the idea of the Holy Spirit in v26-27. What encouragement does the Holy Spirit bring?

Q7. Can a non-Christian understand the work and experience of the Holy Spirit? How might the Bible help?

Bible Study 6

Who is the Holy Spirit? - John 16:1-15

What is the Holy Spirit going to achieve in the lives of his disciples? Jesus is about to answer this question. Jesus has promised the disciples in John 14 that He is going to send the Helper. Jesus' leaving is for their benefit. The Advocate, the Helper will come and will benefit the disciples and the world. What is the Holy Spirit going to do? What is the work of the Holy Spirit?

In v1 Jesus tells the disciples of the persecution to come, in order to keep them "from falling away." In Jesus' warning he is making clear that they and future believers would face persecution from religious authorities. They would be kicked out of the synagogues (v2). The early church's experience shows that Jesus was right. Before His conversion, Paul, the Pharisee, was looking to destroy the Church. It was comforting to know that Jesus saw the future.

The disciples were expecting that Jesus would instantly establish the kingdom of God. Instead, Jesus spoke to them of the many difficulties they would face. Sometimes the most significant advancements are made in the face of tough times. If this happens, we must not lose heart, but be steadfast and faithful.

In v4-7 Jesus is leaving and they need to know what is going to happen. In v5 Jesus says that He is going to the Father, who is the one who sent him. None of the disciples asked where Jesus was going. But they did back in John 13v36?

The disciples were not asking, "Why are you leaving? Where are you going?" They were

concerned what Jesus' leaving will mean for them. They had forgotten to focus on God.

The Holy Spirit and the Christian

By nature, people are spiritually dead (Eph 2:1). The Spirit brings spiritual life to dead people (Eph 2:1 Ezek. 37:14 Romans 8:2, 11, John 6:63). The Holy Spirit makes the believer sure of their union with Christ (1 John 3:24, 4:13). The possession of the Spirit is the Christian's recognizing mark (Rom 8:39). The Christian's body is the temple of the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19, 2 Tim 1b4,5). The Holy Spirit dwells within every Christian forever (John 14 :16).

In v8-11 Jesus says that the work of the Holy Spirit is to convict. All people are guilty. The Holy Spirit will come and convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment.

First, the Spirit will convict the world as guilty in regard to sin. God has to teach us what sin/selfishness is. Without the revelation of God, we would never know God's law or that we have broken it. But sin is more than lawbreaking. It is unbelief v9 and rejection of God's love. People have rejected Jesus, preferring darkness.

Second, the Spirit will convict the world in regard to righteousness. God has to teach us that our right living is inadequate. It is hard for people to understand that our good works do not earn salvation. Our goodness is nothing when referenced to the depths of our sins.

We must be convicted of the gravity of our selfishness/sins. The standard of righteousness is God, not us. Our works do not set us free but condemn us.

Third, the Spirit will convict the world in regard to judgment. Our judgments, values and discernments are all based on the wrong standard. We make judgments based on appearances, status, standard of living, and so many other things. God is the standard for judgment.

How was the Spirit going to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment? See John 16:7 here Jesus is promising the Spirit to the apostles yet his coming will convict the world. The Holy Spirit would come to the apostles who would write down what He revealed to them. When we read and listen to the word of God it is the Holy Spirit working in our hearts to convict us of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The word of God is living, active, and powerful (Hebrews 4:12).

In v12-15 we see the Holy Spirit's work for the church. Jesus still has many things to teach. To help us, Jesus is sending the Spirit of truth. The Spirit will be the one who will guide these apostles into the truth. This is an important promise. To whom is all truth given? All truth is not directly given to every Christian. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives all truth to the apostles. The apostles wrote these things down so that we can have the same understanding.

This revelation by the Spirit will show the glory of Jesus v14. How is the Spirit going to do that? The scriptures reveal Jesus. The spotlight is on Jesus.

Finally, allow the Holy Spirit work in your life. The word of God are the words of Spirit written down by the apostles and prophets who were carried along by the Holy Spirit. The work of the Spirit was threefold. First, the Spirit would convict. Second, the Spirit would reveal all truth. Third, when we read the Word of God we see the glory of Jesus in what we are reading.

Bible Study 6 Questions

John 16:1-15 - Who is the Holy Spirit?

- 1.** As the passage starts, why did Jesus tell His disciples to expect persecution when He was gone? What might have happened had He not told them to anticipate this?
- 2.** Looking at v1-3 why would the early Christians be persecuted? What does Jesus reveal about the persecutors' relationship with the Father?
- 3.** In v7 why did Jesus say it was better for His disciples if He left?
- 4.** In v5-11 what is revealed about the Holy Spirit's ministry to the world? How did you experience that ministry and how did it lead you to Christ?
- 5.** How does the passage teach us about the Bible and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? How does the Holy Spirit help us understand the Bible today?
- 6.** How should these verses 8-11 shape what we pray about and what we might say to our non-Christian friends?
- 7.** Why do some people ridicule and persecute Christians?
- 8.** As you think back on all that we have learned about the Holy Spirit, what is the most comforting or reassuring truth you learned and why?

Notes:

Key dates this term:

HGG Leaders Meeting: 7.30pm – Tuesday 3rd September

Prayer Focus: 8.00pm – Wednesday 4th September, Wednesday 9th October, Wednesday 6th November, Wednesday 4th December, Wednesday 8th January.

Church Mission Events Week: 2nd – 6th October

Carol Services:

Day time Carol service: Thursday 12th December at 3pm

All-age Carol service: Sunday 22nd December at 4.30pm

Carols by Candlelight: Sunday 22nd December at 7.30pm

Carols by Candlelight: Monday 23rd December at 7.30pm