

God the Spirit

By Matt Sanders

Scripture to Memorize

But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. John 16:13

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will have a basic understanding of who God the Spirit is and His role in the world, the church, and the lives of believers.

It's in the Book

When an exceptional runner joins a cross-country team, other runners often are not inspired by the new runner to work harder. They use the excuse that the runner is “special.” However, when a runner starts as an average runner and over time becomes exceptional, that excuse is taken away. Somebody just like them became exceptional before their eyes.

When people see that Jesus Christ lived the way we should, they use the same excuse. But what would they think if someone just like them becomes more like Christ? Could that person be you?

Read John 16:5–15 out loud.

Studying the Passage, vv. 5–7 Verse 5. now I am going. Jesus was nearing His death, and He was trying to prepare His disciples. He was not talking just about His death but also about His ascension, when He would physically leave the earth. **Verse 6. sorrow has filled your heart.** The disciples did not fully understand what Jesus was talking about, but they understood enough to be sad.

Verse 7. to your advantage. Jesus told them that His leaving would be to their advantage. Why? Because the Holy Spirit, the Helper, would then come. How is the coming of the Holy Spirit an advantage? Wouldn't it be better to have Jesus with them?

Jesus was fully God and fully man. He could only be in one place at a time. If Jesus remained on earth, His followers would never want to leave Him. But Jesus commanded believers to make disciples in all nations and promised that He would be with believers wherever we went. How could Jesus be one place at a time and yet be with all believers as they took the gospel to the world?

The Holy Spirit was and is the answer. To carry out Jesus's command, disciples need the Spirit to go with us everywhere at the same time. Plus, the Bible says that when we become believers, God will live in us. He lives in us in the person of the Holy Spirit, something the earthly Jesus could not do.

Discussion Question

When you discover you have the Holy Spirit to empower you to fulfill the purpose God has given you, how does that affect your confidence?

Studying the Passage, vv. 8–11 Verse 8. convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.

Jesus shared one of the most important tasks of the Spirit. Taken with the verses that follow, the word *convict* carries the idea of confronting the world in such a way that its sin is obvious to all. This leaves people with several choices: (1) leave their sin and come to Jesus, (2) stay in their sin and accept the penalty, (3) stay in their sin and redefine it so they convince themselves that there is no sin or penalty, or (4) stay in their sin and attack Jesus.

Verse 9. concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me. Refusing to believe in Jesus leads to sin. Righteousness, being in a right relationship with God, cannot happen without the Spirit. Jesus knew He was leaving the world physically and the remaining “link” to the Father would be the Spirit. The “this world” experience of a relationship with God is through the Spirit.

Verse 11. the ruler of this world. God's judgment on the world in its sinful state is seen in His judgment on the ruler of this world. Soon the disciples would see Christ triumph in judgment over Satan when Jesus rose from the dead.

What is the main way the Spirit “interfaces” with the world? Remember that Jesus said, “I will send Him to you” (John 16:7). Paul would later write about the Spirit living in the hearts of believers (see 2 Corinthians 1:22). The Spirit lives in disciples. The confrontation of the Spirit with the world is not some magical, mystical force. When the Spirit is evident in Christ’s disciples, especially in how they love one another, the Spirit confronts and convicts the world.

This removes all excuses from those separated from Christ. When ordinary people living out ordinary lives love God and one another in a supernatural way, then truth has been revealed. The Spirit is evident in this love, and He is a witness to the world of what faith in Jesus Christ can do.

Discussion Question

Read 1 Corinthians 13. How is this love different from the way the world understands love?

Studying the Passage, vv. 12–15 Verse 12. you cannot bear them now. Jesus told His disciples that they were not ready to hear everything yet, but the Spirit would come to guide them. As you study this lesson, your ability to see the truth is the Spirit at work. One way to know the Spirit is at work is the constant realization that we do not know everything. But if the Spirit is teaching us, we are not discouraged. Without the Spirit, knowledge and achievements often make us trust in ourselves. When the Spirit teaches, we become more humble as we learn. We are learning not for ourselves but so we can better serve King Jesus and others.

Verse 13. He will not speak on His own initiative. The Spirit speaks only what is in the mind of God and by His authority. This means the Spirit will never speak in ways that contradict Scripture. If someone truly has a message from the Spirit, that message always will be consistent with a proper interpretation of the Bible.

The Bible is without error and is the authority for our lives. Unlike the Bible, people are not without error. The Spirit brings together the perfect Word with imperfect believers to help us together to know the truth. This is why we need one another. We should always approach the interpretation of Scripture with humility. The Spirit most clearly speaks to many disciples, not just one.

Verse 14. He will glorify Me. In this passage we see the relationship of the Father, Son, and Spirit. The Spirit glorifies the Son. In John the word *glorifies* has the sense of revealing. The Spirit reveals the Son by taking what is the Son’s and declaring it.

Verse 15. All things that the Father has are mine. Because this is the case, when the Spirit glorifies and reveals the Son, the Spirit is also glorifying and revealing the Father. Jesus said, “No one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6). We now see the role of the Spirit in this statement.

At Home: Nail It Down

The bass player in a band is usually the cool, quiet guy wearing shades and standing near the back. We rarely notice him, but if he were not there, we would know something is missing. On a divine scale that’s how the Holy Spirit is. He is mentioned much less in Scripture than the Father and Son. But if the Spirit were not around, we would know something is missing. Some Christians want to overemphasize the Spirit. Others forget He is even there and take Him for granted. We should do neither. If we are going to understand who God is, we need to know who the Spirit is. The Holy Spirit is: A gift of the Son from the Father A helper to all believers The one who convicts of sin The revealer of the Son and the Father A teacher and guide in the truth You can read more about the Spirit in the book of John, chapters 14–16, and 1 Corinthians 12. Some Christians seem to want a “Private Spirit,” who speaks directly and only to them. They think no one can question them because they would be questioning God. Remember that the Spirit was given to the church. The church sometimes gets things wrong. But through the continuing leadership of the Spirit, the church eventually gets things right. If your growing “knowledge” of God leads you farther away from other Christians, it is not from the Spirit. True knowledge will not only bring us closer to God but also will draw us closer to His people. True knowledge develops true love from God toward the body of Christ.