



NAC-USA
DEVELOPMENT
INSTITUTE

Who is the
Holy Spirit

The Spirit of
Truth

A Witness
of Christ

The Spirit of
Knowledge

MIDWEEK SCRIPT

2018

May

Session 1 – Who is the Holy Spirit?

Welcome! The midweek sessions for the month of May will focus on the work and activity of God, the Holy Spirit. Together, we will expand our understanding of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth and knowledge, and the role that He plays in our lives. Our study of the person and activity of the Holy Spirit is a very fitting topic, since during this month, Christians throughout the world will once again celebrate the Feast of Pentecost – the birth of the church of Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit!

For our first discussion, we'll focus on the Holy Spirit and His role as Helper. Our study will be based on the words of Jesus found in the 14th chapter of the Gospel of John. Let's begin by reading verses 15-18.

If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

Why did Jesus tell His disciples that He prayed that the Father would give another Helper? What did He mean? Remember, Jesus was spending His last evening with His disciples, who were His friends. As they were gathered in the upper room, Jesus celebrated with them the Passover meal, and thereby instituted the Lord's Supper.

Jesus told His disciples that He was about to leave them and they could not go with Him. He divulged that they would face great hostility and many challenges. The disciples were confused by what Jesus was telling them, quite understandably. Jesus offered hope and encouragement by saying, **I pray the Father will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever....** It is with these words that Jesus gives His disciples the assurance of His eternal presence, love, support, and strength. The question is "How?" Let's look deeper into the words Jesus used, and their meaning.

Jesus said "another" would come, which in Greek (*allos*) means, "another of the same kind."

Jesus used the word "Helper" to describe the Holy Spirit. The Greek word for "helper," *parakletos*, has the meaning of "one called to stand alongside" to assist during a struggle; this usually referred to a family attorney who was always on retainer whenever needed.

Some Bible translations use the word "comforter" or "advocate," rather than "helper". Today, the word "comforter" has come to mean providing ease and solace after times of trouble. But the original meaning was different. The original Latin word, *confortare*, means "to strengthen much."

Therefore, Jesus literally meant that the Father would send one like Him, who is called to stand alongside them, whose role is to support them during struggles and impart strength. Jesus had just revealed a great truth, of which He reminded His disciples before His ascension: *"and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:20). Jesus is the original *parakletos*, and through the sending of the Holy Spirit, His presence can still be experienced.

Today, it is reassuring that as members of the body of Christ, we can count on the help and support of Jesus Christ through the activity of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps the church to fulfill its mission as the vehicle in which God offers salvation to mankind. Despite all forces of evil that oppose the will of God, the Holy Spirit strengthens our faith in the promise of Jesus when He said, *"and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against [the church]"* (Matthew 16:18).

We can also count on the help of the Holy Spirit in our personal journey with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We can be certain that Jesus is faithful to us and keeps His promises.

We are not immune to experiencing fear, confusion, loneliness, and sorrow. When we feel this way, we can pray in faith that the Holy Spirit accompanies us with His help. Then we will experience how the Comforter

restores our confidence, peace, love, and joy. The Holy Spirit is like a friend, who we can talk to in prayer every day and ask Him to walk with us at all times and in all circumstances.

We can see the Holy Spirit act in every divine service and sacrament. The Spirit-inspired Word, the grace and proclamation of forgiveness, the celebration of Holy Communion, and God's blessing contribute to draw us closer to God and form us to the image of Jesus Christ. God's love is poured out into the hearts of those who have been reborn through the gift of the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). In the celebration of Holy Communion, the Holy Spirit makes it possible for God's love to grow and expand so that God becomes greater in our lives and we love our neighbor the way Jesus loves them. The fellowship that we experience with Jesus Christ in Holy Communion through the activity of the Holy Spirit equips us to remain faithful to Him and resist evil.

Ultimately, the Holy Spirit keeps hope alive in the return of Christ for all those who align their lives towards this day! (Romans 8:16-17)

Session 2 – The Spirit of Truth

Welcome to the second session on defining the Holy Spirit. Last week, we learned about the Holy Spirit as our Helper. In this session, we'll learn from Jesus that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. In the 14th-17th chapters of John, Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth three times (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). Let's explore some of these teachings about the purpose of the Holy Spirit.

As we learned last week in John 14, Jesus had just broken the news to His disciples that He would soon be leaving them. Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit and teaches them about their Helper. Let's revisit verses 15-17:

If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him or knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

This verse teaches us how the three persons of God work together to care for us. What do Jesus' words tell us about the work of the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth because He is truth and guides us to truth in Jesus Christ. The Spirit is at work in the world, but His activity often goes unnoticed. Do you recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit each day, and allow Him to direct your steps? As followers of Jesus, every day we want to be increasingly aware of His presence.

In John 15:26, we find Jesus' second reference to the Spirit of truth. We'll discuss this verse in our next session.

The third reference comes once again as Jesus is comforting and edifying His disciples. Jesus says in John 16:13-14:

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

The disciples had a great task before them: to take what they had learned from Jesus and share it with the world. And for a few of them, that meant writing what would become the books of the New Testament. That work was lead, guided, and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Today, the Spirit continues to speak with the authority of the Triune God to remind and teach us the truth of Jesus Christ. How well do we remember everything we have heard and been taught? It's great to have someone to help and remind us. We have much to learn about Jesus – what He has done, is doing, and will do in the future. As the author of Scripture, the Holy Spirit's promptings will always align with revelations in the Bible. Test the inspirations of the Spirit against the Bible to be guided by what is true. When the Spirit is allowed to work in us and inspire our actions, we glorify the Lord.

Through the work of the Spirit, we are continually assured that the work of Jesus is real. How important is it to have a source we can trust? In our world today, where misinformation can be prevalent and we must question whether something is fact or fiction, it's critical for us to be in-tune and trust in the Spirit of God.

Sometimes we may justify our actions and words by saying we are led by the Spirit: "It was the Spirit speaking," or "God told me to do that." Think about that reasoning in light of the knowledge of the Spirit of truth. Do our actions and words testify of Jesus? If not, we cannot say that the Spirit is leading us. If we find ourselves using the Holy Spirit as a scapegoat for our behavior, we need to stop, reset, and allow the new creation to grow within us.

Allow the Spirit of truth to continue to teach you more about Christ and direct your path according to God's will. When we seek to be continually in-tune with the Spirit and test everything we hear against what He has revealed, we can be sure that we are walking our journey of faith with truth.

Session 3 – A Witness of Christ

Welcome back! Our first two sessions this month focused on the Holy Spirit as the Helper and the Spirit of truth. This week, our session will focus on Jesus' words in John 15:26-27 – *But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.* Let's turn our attention to the second half of this verse and dig deeper into the role that the Holy Spirit plays in our lives.

Jesus' words to the disciples in John 15 explain how the Holy Spirit will be present in their lives. The Spirit was to testify of Jesus, which in turn would help the disciples in their *own* testimonies of Jesus.

Jesus knew that when the disciples faced hardships, they would be tempted to stray from their commitment to serve Him. We see evidence of this just by looking at how the disciples reacted after Jesus' arrest and His death on the cross: Peter denied knowing Jesus to avoid being arrested (Luke 22:57); many of the disciples, when told by Mary and the other women that Jesus had risen from the dead, continued in their unbelief and despair (Luke 24:11); two of the disciples left Jerusalem after Jesus' death to go to Emmaus – they were sad and astounded that their Lord was gone (Luke 24:13-14); Thomas doubted that Jesus had risen because he had not yet seen Him with his own eyes (John 20:25), and other disciples, after Jesus' death, simply went back to their lives as fishermen, which was something that they were comfortable with (John 21:1-4).

In these moments, the disciples thought that Christ was no longer in their lives or even in this world. Without their Lord to guide and teach them, they were unsure of how to continue, and so they began to return to the lives that they had left behind.

Even after seeing the resurrected Lord at different times over the course of forty days, the disciples remained confused and had difficulty comprehending what it would be like to not have Jesus with them. After all, they had responded to Jesus' call and left everything behind. They had come to believe He was the Son of God and their Savior. They had experienced so much together. How would they be able to carry on without Him in the face of so much adversity and so many unknowns?

The Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2, just as Jesus had promised. It is incredible to contrast the feelings, attitudes, and behavior of the disciples prior to this event and after. The disciples of Jesus had been transformed by the Holy Spirit as He dwelled in them. They were no longer frightened, confused, and hopeless, but instead boldly proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Bolstered with courage, gone was the fear of death. They were willing to give their lives for Christ, and they did.

Peter and John were prepared to be arrested in order to preach the gospel and make believers out of the people in Jerusalem (Acts 4:1-4); the disciples desired to be witnesses of Christ, even though they were beaten for it by the Sadducees as punishment (Acts 5:40-43); and James was martyred by King Herod for his faith (Acts 12:1-2). The disciples faced real danger, in addition to the inherent difficulties that arose from their

calling to travel to other countries to preach the gospel and support established congregations. Consider the impact of these hardships they went through! And yet, they did not stop witnessing Christ.

Why did their responses change so dramatically from fear and despair right after Jesus' death to these courageous moments in the book of Acts? Yes, they had actually seen Jesus as the risen Lord and witnessed His ascension to His Father. Certainly these experiences helped the disciples testify of Christ to the world. But now they also had the Spirit of God dwelling in them! Before the sending of the Spirit, they fled and hid from potential danger; now, they had courage.

The Holy Spirit's purpose on earth is to maintain the cause of Christ, sanctify Christians, and provide comfort in a world that so desperately needs Christ, but so stubbornly pushes Him away. When we believe in and call upon the Holy Spirit to be present in our lives, we will discover a well of courage inside of us. To live a life that testifies of Jesus will not be easy. But, when we trust in the power of the Spirit and pray for His guidance, we can overcome obstacles that try to prevent us from testifying about our Savior.

When we seek the Spirit's guidance in our lives and in our witnessing of Christ, we have to give Him something to work with. The Holy Spirit can inspire courage in us to talk about Jesus, but He can't make the words come out of our mouths. In order to talk about Christ, we have to know Him. This requires studying God's word and knowing what the Bible says about Jesus Christ. We must strive to personally live in communion with God and understand the love and hope we have in Christ.

When we are equipped with this personal knowledge of God, then the Holy Spirit can help us to share that knowledge. We can pray with confidence words similar to the disciples' prayer to God in Acts 4: *For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined to be done. Now, Lord, look on their threats, and **grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word...*** (Acts 4:27-29).

Session 4 – The Spirit of Knowledge

Welcome! Today we'll wrap up our discussion of the Holy Spirit. Please take out your Bibles and turn to John 16. The verses we'll discuss today will help us understand how the Holy Spirit continued the work of revelation that began with Jesus – in both His judgment of the world, and the revelation of God to the disciples. Follow along as I read verses 7 through 11:

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 depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

Why did Jesus have to go away for the Spirit to come? The Holy Spirit reveals and testifies of the glorification of Jesus. At the time when Jesus is saying these words, He still had not died, resurrected, or ascended into heaven. Therefore, the events that the Holy Spirit is intended to reveal have not yet been completed. Until these events take place, the Spirit cannot bear witness to Jesus – He can only come after Jesus has returned to His Father.

The verses tell us that the Spirit will *convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment*. What does that mean? The Greek word that is used for convict (*elegchō*) means to “show someone their sin and summon them to repentance.” So the Spirit will expose the sins of those who condemned Jesus, but through repentance, even they can find grace and forgiveness in Him. Let's look at each statement:

He will convict the world...of sin, because they do not believe in Me. Jesus stood alone at His trial, rejected as the One that God had sent, not only by the Gentiles, but also by the Jewish people and His own disciples.

Jesus was accused of being a sinner, when in fact, His accusers were sinners for not believing that He was the Son of God, thereby rejecting God through Him.

He will convict the world...of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more. The Greek word used for righteousness (*dikaiosynē*) can also include a sense of justice. Jesus' opponents did not judge Him correctly, especially in His claim to be the Son of God. Jesus' resurrection and ascension into heaven prove that He is the Son of God, and exposes their justice as unjust.

He will convict the world...of judgement, because the ruler of this world is judged. Another translation reads, *the prince of this world stands condemned.* Jesus stood condemned in front of Pontius Pilate before He died on the cross, but by His death and resurrection, the evil one stands condemned and defeated through the glorification of Jesus.

As we've explored these three statements, we've seen how the world would be shown their errors through the actions of Jesus in His death and resurrection. Today, we can see how the Spirit also exposed the world in sin, righteousness, and judgment through the disciples and the first Christian community. Their faith in Christ allowed **freedom from the weight of sin**. They strove for the **righteousness and justice found in Christ** because they had His Spirit living within them. And they had the power to **overcome the evil one** because Jesus had defeated him. The first church exposed and condemned the world, not through a trial, but through their love and unity. Is our congregation such a community?

Let's take a look at verses 12-15:

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

After Jesus ascends into heaven, the Spirit takes over as the Teacher, speaking not on His own authority, but instead revealing Jesus to the disciples – just as Jesus revealed God, the Father to them. These verses give us a glimpse of the relationship between God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and how they testify of each other. When we look to the Holy Spirit for guidance, He leads us to Christ, who **is the way and the truth**. And Christ, in turn, leads us to the Father. Yet, the Holy Spirit can only lead us where we willingly choose to go. Allow the Spirit to reveal His knowledge and truth in your life.