

BIBLE STUDY HELPS

TITLE: When the Spirit Comes

TEXT: John 15:26- 16:15

TARGET: SESSION IN A SENTENCE

Believers can always depend on the Spirit's presence and power.

LOOK UP: FOCUSING THE GROUP

Display: Write on marker board or tear sheet – “Stand by Me”

Ask: Who could share examples of a time when someone stood by or walked alongside you when you needed help. How did this experience strengthen your relationship with him/her? How did it help you deal with the circumstances you were facing?

In John, chapter 15, Jesus continues to prepare His disciples for what was to come after His death. Jesus returns to His conversation He had previously started in chapter 14 regarding the work of the Holy Spirit. He reminds them in John 15:26 that *“When the Counselor comes, the one I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father—He will testify about me.”*

The “Counselor” is the Greek noun *Paraclete* [PAR uh kleet] literally referring to someone who is “called alongside” to render help. The Spirit is a Person not a “force.” He is called alongside of and dwells within all who believe! He is sent by Jesus from the Father. Again, we see the perfect harmony demonstrated in the Trinity. The Holy Spirit works in concert with the Father and the Son so that the lost can believe, and so that believers can understand, act on, and proclaim the truth revealed in God’s Word.

What was true then is true now. The Spirit is at work in your life if you are a believer.

First, the Holy Spirit is standing beside you . . .

LOOK IN: UNPACKING THE BIBLICAL TEXT

(Note: The passages covered in this plan are expanded beyond the passages in ETB study)

When Your Testimony Meets Hostility – John 15:27—16:4

²⁷ *You also will testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.* ¹ *“I have told you these things to keep you from stumbling. ² They will ban you from the synagogues. In fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering service to God. ³ They will do these things because they haven’t known the Father or me. ⁴ But I have told you these things so that when their time comes you will remember I told them to you. I didn’t tell you these things from the beginning, because I was with you.*

When Jesus explained to the disciples, in verse 27, that the coming of the Holy Spirit would lead them to *“testify, because you have been with me from the beginning”* the disciples still had no idea what was to come in those next few hours and days. But Jesus knew someone would be there to stand by them and work in and through them after He was gone. Burdened with all that was taking place, He wanted to help them know that His leaving wasn’t an ending but a beginning!

Although verse 27 speaks specifically of the 11 faithful disciples who had been with Him from the beginning, there are specific actions and reactions that will take place when they and we testify about Christ.

Guide: Identify the ways Jesus said people will react to the message of the disciples. (**Option:** list on marker board).

- What are the parallels to what we see taking place today in our country?
- What was the response Jesus desired for them to have when this took place? (Remember)
- When we face criticism and other challenges when testifying about Christ, what are we to remember, and how do we know to remember? (The Holy Spirit)
- Have you ever experienced hostility as a result of telling someone about Jesus? How does knowing we have the “Counselor” standing beside us help us face difficulties when testifying?

While we may face more scrutiny, cynicism, and opposition today in our country than in any other point in history, we are still fortunate compared to what other believers face around the world. Yet it seems we are more silent about our faith than we should be. We must ask ourselves if we truly believe what Jesus said regarding the Holy Spirit. However, it doesn't matter if we believe it or not; it is truth. Our silence really reveals what we truly believe about the power of the Holy Spirit to work through us and in those who are lost to bring about salvation.

Consider: Do you truly believe that the Holy Spirit is standing beside us as we live out and testify about our faith? Do your actions reinforce your beliefs? What do you need to do to adjust your belief to the reality that Jesus is teaching?

Next, we see that the Spirit is standing beside you . . .

When Sorrow Fills Your Heart – John 16:5-7

⁵ But now I am going away to him who sent me, and not one of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' ⁶ Yet, because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷ Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth. It is for your benefit that I go away, because if I don't go away the Counselor will not come to you. If I go, I will send him to you.

Notice that sorrow filled the hearts of the disciples, yet none of them asked for clarity regarding where Jesus was going.

Discuss:

- Why didn't they ask for clarity from Jesus while experiencing sorrow?
- Knowing what we know about the Holy Spirit and Jesus, how can we react to sorrow differently?
- How can we deal with sorrow when we feel as if Jesus is not present with us?
- What can we assume about Jesus' presence in our lives, based on these passages?

The inauguration of the new covenant through Jesus' blood would pave the way for the new age, when the Holy Spirit empowers the church to carry the gospel message to all nations (see Acts 2:16-21). Today, we as Spirit-filled believers can depend on the Holy Spirit to live in us, to comfort us in times of sorrow, and to propel us forward in the gospel mission.

But the Spirit is also standing beside you . . .

When You Share Christ with Others – John 16:8-11

⁸ "When he comes, he will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment: ⁹ "About sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰ about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see me; ¹¹ and about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged."

We understand that the primary ministry of the Holy Spirit would be directed toward believers. However, the Spirit would be crucial in the church's mission to reach the lost with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus affirmed that they would witness in the power of the Spirit, but they lacked the power to bring human hearts to conversion. It is only the Holy Spirit who can *convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment*. The word *convict* means the Holy Spirit reveals the truth in a way that makes one morally accountable for their sins. This conviction exposes the reality of a person's heart—their attitudes and intentions, as well as actions.

It is through conviction that God's offer of salvation through repentance is truly revealed. If someone doesn't believe they are a sinner and that their sin results in eternal separation from God, then they have no need for a Savior. The Holy Spirit's conviction forces us to see ourselves in the mirror of God's righteousness. Then, we can turn from sin and embrace the Savior.

Discuss:

- How would you describe what it feels like to be convicted of your sin?
- How does the Holy Spirit convict people of righteousness? (The reality that Christ is the only Righteous One. No one else is righteous.)
- How does the Holy Spirit convict people of judgment? (It's the judicial response toward sin and violation of God's law. The Holy Spirit is constantly at work, enacting God's judgment against Satan. He brings home the reality that all will eventually face death and the final judgment before God if they don't receive Christ. – See Revelation 20:15)

Consider:

- What happens when we take responsibility for convicting the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment?
- When we fill like a failure or are afraid to share Christ with someone, what is the reality we must believe based on these passages?

Believers must depend on the Holy Spirit to convict others about sin. While we should learn ways to share the gospel, we must remember that a polished presentation is not the answer. Nor can we yell, scream, or legislate people to experience conviction for sin, righteousness, or judgement. Only the Spirit can convict people of their sin, their desperate need for a Savior, and that they will one day stand in judgement before a Holy God who can't look upon sin. Yet we will and should do what Jesus said the early disciples would do. We should "testify" about Him through the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, the Spirit is standing beside you . . .

When More Understanding Is Needed – John 16:12-15

¹² "I still have many things to tell you, but you can't bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. For he will not speak on his own, but he will speak whatever he hears. He will also declare to you what is to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you."

Guide:

- What is the assurance we can have, based upon this passage, when we struggle with understanding the Word of God or God's ways?
- How would you paraphrase the personal approach the Holy Spirit will take in teaching us His truth?
- What can we assume about God's Word based on these passages?

Jesus had so much more to share but time and comprehension was limited. The Spirit revealed truth by inspiring holy men of old to write down God's Word, the Scriptures (**see 2 Timothy 3:15; 2 Peter 1:20-21**). The revelation of Scripture would be limited to the human writers God selected and inspired. The Spirit's work of interpreting and illuminating the Scriptures is His ministry to all believers. Because the Spirit lives in believers, He assists them in understanding and applying spiritual things (**see 1 Corinthians 2:14**).

Discuss: Can you recall a time when the Holy Spirit guided you into a deeper understanding of God's Word? What were the results of that understanding in your devotion to Christ?

We know the Holy Spirit will teach us God's truth. We also know this doesn't take place without a concerted effort on our part to study God's Word so that the Spirit can help us understand. Consider how you can make personal Bible study a higher priority. Consider removing distractions while you are studying God's Word so you can give the Holy Spirit your full attention as He speaks and works through God's Word. We have the assurance that God's Spirit will declare, reveal, and illuminate everything we need to know Christ and to serve Him faithfully.

LOOK OUT: LIVING OUT THE TARGET

The Holy Spirit is there, standing alongside of you and dwelling in you . . .

- When your testimony meets hostility.
- When sorrow fills your heart.
- When you share Christ with others.
- When more understanding is needed.

Respond: Who could share a way in which you will respond to the Holy Spirit in one of the areas we studied?

Evaluate if you are truly depending on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in your life. Can the world see the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in your life in the way that you respond to life and in the way you live?