

**BIBLE
STUDIES
FOR LIFE®**

Advanced Bible Study

SUMMER 2022 | CSB

STUDY 1:

*Never Alone:
The Holy Spirit
in Our Lives*

STUDY 2:

*How to Love
Your Neighbor*



IS A DO-OVER POSSIBLE?

Many golfers allow something called a “mulligan.” If a player makes a bad shot, a mulligan is the chance to re-do that one shot. This little perk is great for amateur golfers (it’s not allowed in professional golf), even though they are usually limited to one mulligan per game.

Ever wish for a mulligan with your life? An opportunity to do it all over again, but without all the sin and mistakes? God offers you something even better: He offers you a new life. God doesn’t gloss over your past or pretend it never happened. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died to remove the guilt and stain of your sin. God forgives!

The Bible doesn’t call this a mulligan. Jesus used the term “born again “(John 3:3). Sin leads to eternal death, but He wants you with Him for eternity. Jesus took your sin and died in your place. God raised Jesus from the dead, and His resurrected life means a resurrected new life for you. Forgiveness. Freedom. A new beginning. Born again into a life with Him that never ends.

To receive this gift, you must let go of your sin. Repent and put your faith in Christ. Admit to God you are a sinner and ask Him to forgive you. Confess your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Express your repentance and faith by praying something like this:

“Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I believe Jesus died on the cross to forgive me of my sins. I’m sorry for all the wrong I’ve done and ask You to forgive me. I now accept Your gift of eternal life. Thank You for Your love, forgiveness, and a new life in Jesus Christ. From this day forward, I choose to follow You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Share your decision to follow Jesus with a pastor or those in your Bible study group. Get involved in a church that will help you grow in your faith. Be baptized as an expression of your faith.

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DON'T MISS THIS!

EBOOK

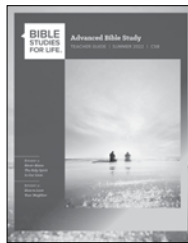
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INTRODUCTION

NEVER ALONE: THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR LIVES

The beauty of the Christian life is that we are never on our own. Just as we cannot save ourselves by our own power, we cannot live the Christian life in our own power. God comes to us through His Holy Spirit, leading us to faith in Christ and empowering us to walk daily in His strength.

How This Study Supports the Discipleship Plan (p. 179):

Seek God. We seek God and come to know Him because His Holy Spirit is at work in us. He draws us into a relationship through our faith in Christ, and the Holy Spirit guides us to walk with Him.

SESSION 1

Convicted by the Spirit

THE POINT

The Holy Spirit convicts of sin and points to the truth of salvation.

THE PASSAGES

John 15:26-27; 16:7-15

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

In college I had a roommate who had incredible powers of persuasion and an uncanny ability to convince anyone to believe anything. His wasn't the typical "used car salesman" but he could get people to join him in any scheme he undertook. For example, he once convinced a group of us to join him in a multi-level marketing plan that involved purchasing groceries from a wholesale firm. The groceries were discounted to the buyer, and for each person we enrolled in the plan, we made commission from their purchases. Deep down I didn't feel like it was a good idea, but for some reason I just couldn't say no. He convinced me to buy in, but he didn't develop a conviction within me that I was doing the right thing. Because I never developed a conviction that my "get rich quick" grocery business was the right endeavor for me—I didn't stick with it.

There is a big difference between being *convinced* and being *convicted*. Being convinced may lead to a decision, but often without real belief. Being convicted is much deeper. Convictions move us from action for action's sake to deep belief which becomes a core value for life.

Humans may convince us that the claims of the gospel are true, but only the Holy Spirit of God can convict us that the claims of God's gracious message are worthy of building our lives on. Only the Spirit can convict us to embrace the wonderful salvation of Jesus as a core value for our lives and eternity. Only God's Spirit can embolden followers of Jesus to be faithful to their gospel task in the face of opposition. Thankfully, God sent His Spirit into the world to convict humans to recognize their need, embrace Jesus as the One who can meet our deepest need, and be faithful to the responsibility as witnesses which He has assigned.

THE SETTING

As Jesus was moving closer to His death, He pulled His disciples away to partake in His last Passover meal. At that time He instituted the Lord's Supper, and gave His disciples parting instructions before departing this earth in physical form. John 13:31 through John 17 make up what is known as Jesus's farewell discourse. In it He explained that He soon would be departing. Naturally, the disciples were disturbed by this news, so Jesus consoled the disciples and assured them that He and the Father agreed about His upcoming departure because they were one in essence and one in work. He explained that even though He was leaving them, He would not leave them alone and the work would continue. In fact, He said, they would do even greater works after His departure (14:12). They would do greater work because the Father would send the Holy Spirit, not only to be with them, but to live in them. Because of the indwelling Spirit, they would be fruitful, but they would also be hated by the world. He assured them that even though the world would hate them, it was because the world first hated Him. The Spirit, however, would be in them and with them so that while enduring the hatred, they would testify of Jesus. Jesus went on to explain the role of the Spirit in them and how He would do

His work in the world. Jesus closed the farewell discourse with an intimate prayer to the Father, in which He asked that the Father glorify Himself in His death. He prayed that the Father would sanctify His disciples and protect them from the evil one, and use them in the world to glorify both Himself and the Father. He asked the Father to make His followers one even as He and the Father are one (chap. 17).

STUDY THE BIBLE

John 15:26-27

²⁶ “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. ²⁷ You also will testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.

Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to us. Jesus had just finished explaining to the disciples that because the world hated Him, it would also hate them (15:18). No doubt the disciples were concerned about the seemingly difficult prospect of being hated, but Jesus was concerned for them as well. In 14:1 He had encouraged them not to be troubled by what He was telling them, and then in 16:1 He explained that He had told them these things to keep them from stumbling.

To help their troubled hearts and to embolden them in the face of hostility, Jesus promised in 15:26, **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.** In referring to the *Spirit of truth*, Jesus used the theologically and practically rich word *Counselor*. In the original Greek, the term *Counselor* (KJV “Comforter,” NASB “Helper”) meant “to call alongside, to encourage, to exhort.”

A counselor might be one who came by another person’s side to give help or provide encouragement. It was used in the legal

arena of John's day to speak of one who would come alongside a person in a courtroom to speak on his behalf.¹ Later in John's first epistle, the apostle used the term to describe Jesus Himself, the One who serves as the Advocate for our sin (1 John 2:1).

Jesus described the Holy Spirit as **the one I will send to you from the Father**. God has revealed Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is one with respect to His being, but three with respect to Person. The Father, Son, and Spirit together accomplish our salvation. The Father planned it (Eph. 1:3-6), the Son accomplished it (vv. 7-12), and the Spirit applies it to our lives when we believe (vv. 13-14). Jesus's words thus highlight the close relationship of the Spirit to the Father and the Son. Jesus described the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth. In the upper room, Jesus had described Himself as "the truth" (John 14:6). God also has given us His Word, which provides us truth on which to base our lives.

People today need to build their lives on God's truth. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus likened someone who did not follow His words to a man who built his house on sand (Matt. 7:26-27). Since the Holy Spirit, Jesus declared, is **the Spirit of truth**, it makes sense that He **proceeds from the Father**. Both Father and Son send the Holy Spirit to us.

In the context of these verses then, Jesus's promise was that the role of the Holy Spirit would be to **testify about** Him along with the disciples, for testifying was their responsibility. *Testify* in verse 27 is an imperative. Jesus's command placed before the disciples a responsibility He would reiterate in Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8 shortly before His ascension to heaven.

They would testify about Jesus not only because it was their responsibility, but also because they were uniquely qualified for the task. After all, Jesus reminded them, **you have been with me from the beginning**. Jesus's disciples had been with Him everywhere during His public ministry. For over three years, they had witnessed His teaching, His miracles, and His life. Of

all human witnesses, they were most equipped to testify. While the word *beginning* is important in establishing the eternity of Jesus (John 1:1), its most common use in John's Gospel (2:11, 6:64, 8:25, 16:4) is in referring to the beginning of Jesus's earthly ministry. That is how Jesus meant it in verse 27. Since they had walked with Jesus from day one and had witnessed all He had done, they were, from a human perspective, uniquely qualified to testify about Him.

Jesus's promise of the coming Counselor would have been of great comfort to the disciples. Not only were they humanly qualified, but spiritually equipped as well. Even though they would face opposition, they would not testify alone. They would have One walking alongside them testifying to the truth of Jesus and His gospel. And while Jesus's promise most specifically applied to the disciples because they were with Him from the beginning, it does not exclude those who would come to trust Jesus in the future. The objective truth of Scripture and the subjective experience of every follower of Jesus provides the content of their testimony until Christ returns. The promise of the Spirit, then, is a promise to all who are in Christ!

Over the course of their three years with Jesus, the disciples had seen and heard much from Him. How would they remember it all so that they could testify? Well, **the Counselor . . . , the One** He would **send to** them **from the Father** would remind them. Earlier, Jesus had explained to the disciples, "the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you" (14:26). In 1 Corinthians 2:12 Paul wrote, "Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who comes from God, so that we may understand what has been freely given to us by God." While the disciples eventually would come to understand and experience this truth on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:2-4), Jesus provided them encouragement and comfort in advance by promising that the

Spirit would bring to their remembrance exactly what they needed in the exact moment they would need it in order to testify about Him.

What are some lasting truths from John 15:26-27?

- ▶ Every Christian is responsible to testify about Jesus.
- ▶ No Christian is ever alone. As Christians fulfill their responsibility to be witnesses of Jesus, the Spirit of God is testifying with them.
- ▶ God has provided the objective truth of His Word and the subjective experience of faith as evidence by which Christians testify.

John 16:7-11

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. 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.

The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin. In 16:1-6 Jesus explained He had taught all of these things to the disciples so that they would not fall away from their faith when the times became tough—and they indeed would become tough. Jesus revealed to His disciples that they would go through intense persecution in the days ahead because they were His followers. For example, Jesus warned, they would be banned from synagogues and some would even suffer martyrdom. He also reminded them that He must **go away**. But, Jesus knew His disciples would grieve at His leaving, so He did not leave them stranded; He provided His followers with comfort and encouragement.

As discouraged as they must have been, Jesus said it was for their benefit that He depart. He assured them, **Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth.** Jesus was anchoring His words to His truthfulness. He had never lied to them and He would not start now. Not only were His words truth, He is “the truth” (14:6). Remember, the disciples could not see salvation’s entire plan as it was unfolding. Christians today can look back and see how these events transpired, but the disciples were living in the midst of them. The disciples had been with Him during His entire earthly ministry. They knew Him, loved Him, and had followed Him. But now, with His words, how in the world could it benefit the disciples if Jesus went away?

In His going, He would send **the Counselor** (“Advocate,” NIV; “Comforter,” KJV; “Helper,” ESV) who would walk alongside them, enabling them to fulfill their responsibility to testify about Him and helping them to do so, even in the face of opposition. In verses 8-11 Jesus provided more information concerning the role of *the Counselor*, whom He later described as “the Spirit of truth” (v. 13). In verse 8 He identified one primary specific action the Counselor would perform and three areas in which it would happen; in verses 9-11 He further elaborated on each of those areas.

The primary action of the Spirit is that **He will convict the world.** The word *convict* can mean to scorn or shame someone. It can also mean “to pronounce a guilty verdict” or “to bring people to an understanding of their guilty state.” But in the New Testament, its most common meaning is to show someone his or her sin and to call the person to repentance. Jesus declared that when the Holy Spirit came, He would bring God’s truth to bear **about sin, righteousness, and judgment.** Verses 9-11 highlight each of these in turn.

In the New Testament, the biblical writers focused almost exclusively on the role of the Holy Spirit within and to believers, but here Jesus declared the Spirit would **convict the**

world. *The world* refers to the unbelieving mass of humanity that has rejected Jesus and is the object of the word *convict*; even though the action of the verb is carried out on the world, it is carried out for the benefit of the disciples. After all, they were responsible for testifying to the world about Jesus and belief in Him. The Spirit, through the testimony of the disciples, would show the world its sin and call it to repentance.

About comes from a Greek prepositional construct that means “in reference to.” So the role of the Counselor is to *convict the world* in reference to its *sin*, its *righteousness*, and its *judgment*.

Jesus said the Counselor would convict the world **about sin, because they do not believe in me.** To *believe* is much more than an intellectual endeavor. It is a faith endeavor. The Counselor doesn’t convict the world because of intellectual assent about Jesus, or lack thereof. The Counselor convicts the world that hasn’t trusted Jesus as “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29). The Holy Spirit would testify further to the truth of Jesus’s ministry and the error of the world’s understanding.

In addition, part of the Spirit’s ministry in our lives is to help us understand when we turn aside from God’s purpose. As we receive the Spirit’s conviction, we should repent and turn back to the Lord to experience restoration to fellowship. Ultimately, any sin comes from not believing God on the particular point at which we fail Him. Conviction over our sin, while painful, is actually a good thing, because it leads to our restoration and actually strengthens our relationship with the Lord.

Righteousness is doing what God requires, doing the right thing. It refers to God’s holy expectation or standard. Throughout the Gospel of John, the Jews pursued what they believed was genuine righteousness, but what they were doing wasn’t right. They believed righteousness could be achieved by paying close attention to temple observances and keeping the

law. Jesus repeatedly debated the religiously elite and pseudo-righteous, pointing out that doing the right thing was believing in Him and the One who sent Him.

Jesus, in His earthly ministry, convicted the world of its faulty righteousness. **Because**, as He said to the disciples, **I am going to the Father and you will no longer see me**, the Counselor would assume the role of convicting the world of its false righteousness. Jesus was about to finish the work God had given Him to do (17:4). Once He accomplished it through His death and resurrection, He would ascend to heaven. The world would no longer see Him, but Jesus's resurrection and ascension confirmed His righteous cause. In Jesus's absence, as the Counselor lived in and worked through the disciples, the world would see genuine righteousness, hear the gospel message of righteousness found only in Jesus, and hear the clarion call of God to repent and trust Christ alone.

Judgment conjures up ideas of an end-time tribunal in which the world and **the ruler of this world has been judged** and condemned. While Scripture does teach this truth, that is not the point of Jesus's statement in verse 11. *Judgment* in the present context speaks of the world's evaluation of or decision about Jesus. Earthly rulers enact judgment as they see fit, but God's judgment will be perfect and final. Further, some earthly rulers pervert justice and issue poor or unfair judgments.

The world, and the ruler of the world, had wrongly assessed Jesus. The world believed He was a demon-possessed lunatic (7:20, 8:48, 10:20) or a blasphemous enemy of God (10:33). Following the lie of the evil one, the world had incorrectly evaluated Jesus, failing to understand He was the promised Messiah who would save His people from their sins. Consequently, because Satan already was judged by Jesus's imminent death and resurrection, the world was as well (3:18). The Counselor would work through the disciples' testimony to convict the world of its faulty judgment and call it to repentance.

What are some lasting truths from John 16:7-11?

- ▶ Jesus based His promise of the role of the Counselor upon His truthfulness, and He cannot lie. He is faithful!
- ▶ Since it is the responsibility of the Counselor to convict unbelievers of sin, righteousness, and judgment, Christians can rest in the simplicity of our role: telling Jesus's story!
- ▶ Since the ruler of this world and the world itself already stands condemned, there is an urgency for followers of Jesus to fulfill their responsibility as witnesses.

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. ¹⁵ Everything the Father has is mine. This is why I told you that he takes from what is mine and will declare it to you.**

The Holy Spirit guides us in truth. Over the course of His three-year earthly ministry, Jesus had taught the disciples many truths, all in their proper time. In 16:4 Jesus explained that "from the beginning" He had not told them of the difficulties they would face, primarily because He was with them. But now He was providing new information, when they needed it. In verses 12-15, Jesus informed the disciples that He still had **many things to tell** them, but they were not ready to **bear them** yet. In His absence, however, **the Spirit of truth** would guide them to understand all the information Jesus wanted to unpack for them, but couldn't just yet.

The *many things* Jesus wanted to tell them might have been further revelation about His will and work that were played out in the life of the early church in Acts and the remaining

New Testament epistles, or it could have been more information about the persecution they would face because of being His followers. The latter seems to be more likely because of the unusual use of the word translated *bear*. In its four other uses in John's Gospel (10:31, 12:6, 19:17, 20:15), the word means "to carry" or "to pick up." Here, the idea is "to accept something that is difficult." Because Jesus had already handed out some heavy and disturbing news about coming persecution, He knew the disciples weren't able to bear or process any more difficult information. In time, however, after the Counselor would come, they would have the power to bear the news and understand it in a new and glorious light. They would come to see persecution in the name of Jesus as an honor and for His glory.

Jesus further explained the role of the Counselor: **he will guide you into all the truth.** The Greek word rendered *guide* literally means to assist someone in reaching a desired destination, but figuratively, as it is used here, the word means to assist someone in acquiring information or knowledge.

All the truth is not a totality of information related to all topics, but rather truth about living in Christ, including the persecution to come and the role of the Spirit in enabling the disciples to face it and make the most of it for God's glory. Jesus was clear that the Spirit would not create new truth or work independently from the Father.

After all, the truth of which Jesus spoke was truth He wanted to tell them, but they weren't yet ready to bear it. The truth the Spirit would speak was truth He had already heard from Jesus: **He will not speak on his own, but he will speak whatever he hears. He will also declare to you what is to come.**

Previously in John, Jesus had explained numerous times that He does nothing or says nothing on His own but does what He has received from the Father and speaks what He has heard from the Father (5:30, 6:38, 7:28, 12:49). Jesus's stated reason for utter dependence upon the Father was that He may be glorified

(7:18). Similarly, Jesus said the Spirit **will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you.** The Spirit's coming and subsequent role in the world among God's people would be for the glory of Jesus. Just as Jesus had walked with His disciples during the course of His earthly ministry, so the Spirit would be with them as they continued their ministries. He would lead them into all He had for them, until they fully accomplished God's purpose for their lives. Whatever truth into which the Spirit would guide the disciples would be Jesus's truth, but Jesus's truth was truth He had received from the Father. That is why Jesus said, **Everything the Father has is mine.** Just as Jesus depended on the Father, so the Spirit would depend on Jesus, and all so that the Father might be glorified.

Jesus's final statement in verse 15: **This is why I told you that he takes from what is mine and will declare it to you,** makes several important points.

1. Since the Spirit declares what He has received from Jesus and Jesus declares what He has received from the Father, the disciples can fully trust the Spirit and His ministry.
2. The dependence on the Father by which both the Spirit and Jesus operate exemplifies the life of dependence the disciples must have on the Spirit of truth and models what Spirit-filled living looks like.
3. The line of dependence from disciple to Spirit, Spirit to Jesus, Jesus to the Father is intended to glorify God.

What are some lasting truths from John 16:12-15?

- ▶ God isn't in the business of hiding His truth, but revealing it to His children through His Word and the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ Followers of Jesus have been redeemed and are transformed in to Christlike maturity through dependence upon God's Holy Spirit.
- ▶ Christ-followers exist to glorify God and do so when we receive and live His truth.

LIVE IT OUT

As you reflect on this session, consider the following questions:

Since the Counselor has come from the Father, what is our primary role?

How is it beneficial for followers of Christ that He went away?

What is the responsibility of the Counselor as Christians fulfill their responsibility and how is that encouraging?

As a leader, how could you help another person learn to fulfill their role under the Spirit's control?

1D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 499–500.