

## The Work of the Holy Spirit John 16:4b-15

[If you're new we're going through the gospel of John. This passage is in the farewell discourse (14-16). Jesus is within hours from his death. So we're reading some of his final words to his disciples. Last words are indeed important words, for everyone, whether you are a follower of Jesus or not]. **Pray.**

This is an important passage because many people are **perplexed** by the work of the Spirit; others **avoid** the subject of the Spirit; and still others have **erroneous** views on the Spirit.

### A. Many are **perplexed** by the Spirit....

- John Stott tells of a Chinese inquirer of the Christian faith. She had read the story of Jesus being baptized and then the Spirit descending like a dove. But she asked, **“God the Father (who is speaking) I understand. God the Son I understand – Jesus of Nazareth. But who is this *holy bird*?”**
- Or like the little boy who was seen by his father dunking **his teddy bear in a puddle of water in the backyard**. He had attended a baptism the previous day and was re-enacting the whole thing with his teddy bear. His Father drew near to hear his son perform this pseudo baptism of the bear. He heard him say, **“I baptize you in the name of the Father, and in the name of the Son, and in the name of the *Only Ghost*.”**
- **That's a step better than Shane: “Father, Son, Resurrection.”**

### B. Others **avoid** the subject of the Holy Spirit...

- Sometimes because of the abuses of the Spirit, many go the opposite direction.
- They neglect the Holy Spirit.
- **He's treated as the poor cousin of the Trinity; or the crazy uncle in the Godhead.**
- But it's a tragic mistake to have **pneumaphobia** – to avoid the Spirit and to try to live the Christian life apart from His presence and power.
- We can't live the Christian life apart from the Spirit.
- Our response to the outrageous practices done by some in the name of the Spirit should not be *avoidance*; but rather, an accurate understanding of the Spirit, and a life lived in the power of the Spirit.
- **“Some may be as straight as a gun barrel, but they're just as empty.”**
- There's no life, vitality, joy, exuberance, faith, obedience, pursuit of godliness. Just dead religion and moralistic therapeutic deism.

### C. And some have **erroneous views** and **practices** regarding the Spirit.

- And we could list a number of examples – **from Benny Hinn's ridiculous services to various cults; to modern churches that fail to teach the Bible and emphasize experience over the clear teaching of the Gospel.**

**John 16 is important for all these reasons.**

- This passage includes the fourth and fifth “paraclete statements” (16:7-11; 12-15; we’ve looked at 14:16-17; 14:26; 15:26-27). The “Helper,” the Holy Spirit.
- It is remarkable to consider that Jesus is about to leave and what does he keep repeating – **the role of the Holy Spirit.**
- **Of all the gifts you may receive in this life, there is no gift like the gift of the Holy Spirit!**

**So what does this passage teach us about the work of the Spirit?**

### 3 Truths....

- He indwells the believer.
- He convicts the world.
- He reveals the truth and exalts the Son.

#### #1: He Indwells the Believer (16:4b-7)

#### 4b: Jesus has been talking about persecution that is coming for the disciples.

- He’s aware that he is not going to be with them much longer to absorb the hostilities and provide comfort like he has.
- In the past he was with them (for three years) but now he is leaving.

#### 5-6: He is going away ... **though no one is asking him about his departure.**

- They had asked previously but the previous inquiries were not pursued deeply, and they were focused on the disciples sorrow, not so much with the big picture.
- They are swamped in sorrow.
- It is not until they experience Easter joy that their sorrow will be replaced.

#### 7: In light of their **sorrow**, Jesus encourages them by reminding them of the Helper.

“If I do not go away **the Helper cannot come**” (7b)

- **The Spirit can’t come until Jesus finishes his work (Jn 7:37-38).**
- **Then in the new covenant age of the Spirit will dawn, bringing manifold blessings!**
- **The Holy Spirit will apply the work of Christ to us; He will unite us to Christ.**

“**It is to your advantage that I go away...**” (7a)

- The disciples viewed Jesus’ departure was disastrous but Jesus says it’s advantageous
- How? **How could it be for their good that he go away?**
- **And wouldn’t you prefer to have Jesus with you physically right now?**
- **We look back at the apostles with envy, don’t we?**
- **We say, If only ... I would have seen him \_\_\_\_\_ or heard him \_\_\_\_\_”**
- So *how* would the Holy Spirit’s ministry be advantageous?

The apostles experienced **two** disadvantages during the ministry of Jesus, which would be overcome by the Spirit’s ministry:

(1) Jesus’ presence was localized but is now universalized.

- They were sometimes separated from Jesus. (Sometimes he would be on the other side of the sea; or praying on the mountain alone, etc).
- They could not enjoy uninterrupted fellowship.
- Jesus could only be at one place at one time.

### **Suppose Jesus didn't return to the Father. What would everyone do? We would all be taking trips to the Middle East!**

- If that were the case today, think of the problem that would create! Every train crowded, every ship sailing; planes heading to Israel, etc. Traffic from all over the world... then the roads would be congested, and you probably couldn't even get close to Jesus (like going to the Louvre to see the Mona Lisa).
- The Spirit of Christ removes this problem.
- Through the Spirit, Christ is with us always.
- **The Spirit has made the presence of Christ available and accessible to everyone, everywhere.**
- And for **churches everywhere**. Now, when the congregation gathers to worship, the Spirit of Christ is among us.
- **Pastors can't be everywhere; your small group can't; but the Spirit is with us, everywhere.**

### **(2) Jesus' presence is no longer *external* but is now *internal*.**

- **Jesus was outside the disciples.** He wasn't *in* them.
- **He couldn't change them from within.**
- **But later he would do – 14:17** -- “The Spirit will be with you, and *in you*.”
- This is why it's better that he go away.

### **If we are believers in Jesus Christ, then the Spirit of Christ indwells us. (Rom 8:9)**

- **Our very body is the temple of the Spirit.**
- **What a privilege to have the Holy Spirit in us!**
- **We've already studied John 3 – how the Spirit brings new birth/regenerates)**
- **He changes us from the inside out.**

**So The Holy Spirit not only *universalizes* – making the presence of Jesus accessible to people around the world – but he also *internalizes* – bringing us to life and coming to indwell us.**

### **What is the indwelling Spirit doing in us?**

(5 things come to mind immediately; not an exhaustive list)

- (1) He Comforts Us** – Remember the context here. Persecution. The Departure of Jesus.
  - But the Spirit will be the comforter.
  - The Spirit of Christ brings us peace.
- (2) He Assures Us of our Salvation** – We are sealed with the Spirit (Eph 1); the Spirit assures us that we have been adopted by God (Rom 8).
- (3) He shows Christ to us and conforms Christ in us.**

## 2 Cor 3:17-18

<sup>17</sup> Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. <sup>18</sup> And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

- So first he makes Christ **beautiful to us** (see 16:14)
  - He “has a floodlight ministry” (Packer). We don’t pay attention to the floodlight but to that which the light magnifies (like a building).
  - Then as we see the beauty of Christ, we are **then made more like Christ**.
  - We become like that which we worship.
  - The Spirit does **Galatians 5:16-26** – he produces the fruit of the Spirit in us; or the character of Jesus.
  - **To be conformed to the image of His Son** -- this is God’s eternal purpose for us (Romans 8:29); Our eschatological future (1 John 3:2); it is what God is doing by the Spirit in us now (2 Cor 3:17-18)
    - It is not that we struggle and try to just imitate Jesus in our own strength. But that the Spirit of Christ comes to indwell us to do this work.
    - William Temple: *It’s no good giving me a play like Hamlet or King Lear and telling me to write a play like that. Shakespeare could do it; I can’t. And it is no good showing me a life like the life of Jesus and telling me to live a life like that. Jesus could do it; I can’t. But if the genius of Shakespeare could come and live in me, then I could write plays like his. And if the Spirit of Jesus could come and live in me, then I could live a life like his.*
- (4) **He Illuminates our minds to understand the Scriptures (Lk 24; 1 Cor 2)**  
“God’s mind is revealed in the Holy Scriptures but we can see nothing without the spectacles of the Holy Spirit” (Thomas Manton)
- (5) **He Empowers us for ministry** – The Spirit gifts us and empowers us to do ministry (1 Cor. 12:11) to/with one another, and among the world.
- The church is not like going to the movies; it’s more like joining the army.
  - Everyone is gifted to serve, and everyone must serve.
  - We’re not eating popcorn as a consumer, while our brothers and sisters are doing battle in the foxhole.

## #2: He Convicts the World (16:8-11)

These verses are very important because it shows the Spirit is not only working among believers; but he is at work in the world (among non-Christians).

- The Spirit has an offensive agenda; or a missional agenda.

These verses predict precisely what happens in Acts 2.

- Following **Peter’s first sermon, people were “cut to the heart.”**
- They ask, “What must we do to be saved?”
- They weren’t asking this previously!
- Many had rejected Christ and wanted him crucified! But then they believed!
- Peter says, **“Repent and be baptized and receive the gift of the Spirit”**

- Then 3,000 were converted! Jesus never saw that response. (There were only 120 in the upper room after three years of ministry).
- **The success wasn't due to Peter's brilliance, but the Spirit's witness.**
- God replaces the witnesses, they come and go, but the Spirit continues this work!
- **He primarily does this convicting work through believer's witness; he always does it in relationship to the gospel.**

Newbigin on this verse, “We see that the Spirit is not the domesticated auxiliary of the Church; he is the powerful advocate who goes before the Church to bring the world under conviction.” (Cf, Acts 5:30-32)

**Ex: Public Speaking, types of speeches (informative, persuasive, and special occasion)**

- We are called to persuade, compel, and beg people to come to Christ.
- But the most compelling evangelist is the Spirit.
- The Spirit is the ultimate evangelist.

This should encourage us as we do evangelism.

- **Jonathan Edwards, Sinners in the Hands – no effect in his church; preached it in Enfield and couldn't even finish!**
- The difference? The Spirit's convicting work among those present.

He will “**convict**” the world. (v. 8)

- He will show the unbeliever the true state of things so that he or she may turn to Christ and be saved.
- **He is like a holy X-ray to expose sin, and lead people to repentance.**
- We need the Spirit because we are worse than we imagine – like going to the doctor or the dentist – after they do a thorough examination of you.

Apart from the Spirit, the unbeliever does not know the truth about **sin**, **righteousness**, or **judgment**.

- But the Spirit awakens the sinner.
- If you're a Christian, you know what this is like.
- **You sense God dealing with you**, exposing your sin, and drawing you to repentance and faith in Jesus.

**A. Concerning sin because they do not believe in me (v. 9)**

- At the heart of sin is **unbelief**.
- The Spirit will convict people of the sin that puts self at the center of all things and causes them not to believe in Jesus.
- He shows the unbeliever that he or she is guilty; and brings that guilt home to their conscious, so that they may cry out to Jesus and be saved.

**B. Concerning righteousness because I got to the Father (v. 10)**

- He will show what righteousness is, and show where righteousness is found.
- Again, he will do this through the gospel and through the Christian community (**Jn 13:35**), through ***gospel declaration*** and ***gospel demonstration***.
- **The world is impressed with its own perceived goodness and righteousness, when it should be impressed by Jesus.**
- Many did not see him as the righteous one; but the Spirit corrects this.
- The world does not understand righteousness because they are unrighteous (Rom 3), but the world doesn't see it and believe it.

Now the Spirit will show the world **what righteousness is, and will also show where righteousness is found** – in Christ Jesus.

- People will not be convinced about righteousness apart from the Spirit.
- The Spirit will show that righteousness is not earned through personal effort, but it is received by trusting in Christ's atoning work.

### **C. Concerning Judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged (v. 11)**

- Through the gospel, the Spirit will convince sinners that **there is a judgment.**
- The Spirit will convince sinners that **an innocent man was crucified; and that the world is worshiping the wrong ruler.**
- The Spirit will convince sinners that **they can't bear a judgment from Jesus.**
- The Spirit will show the world that there is such a thing as judgment, which was **proved by the Judgment of Satan, and the breaking of Satan's power at the cross.**
  - **The blow death to Satan on the cross was a precursor to the final defeat that awaits him; he can still bark and bite, but he's on a leash and is headed for the pound (KD)**
- The Holy Spirit will show the sinners that the Holy Son of God was crucified, was raised from the dead; that He triumphed over the evil one, and ascended to the Father, and **now sits as the world's judge.**
- But apart from the Spirit, people do not embrace these things, as they ought.

### **Application: The Spirit and Our Witness**

“Our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction” (**1 Thess 1:5**).

- You can hear the gospel; and you can hear the gospel in power – with the convicting and converting power of the Spirit. That's what changes lives.

Jonathan Edwards:

**The Spirit that is at work takes off persons' minds from the vanities of the world, and engages them in a deep concern about eternal happiness, and puts them upon earnestly seeking their salvation, and convinces them of the dreadfulfulness of sin and of their own guilty and miserable state as they are by nature. He awakens men and women's consciences, and makes them sensible of the dreadfulfulness of God's anger, and causes in them a greater desire and earnest care and endeavor to obtain his favor.**

We can't do all that! Only the Spirit can!

So my Christian friend, Do you see how dependent we are on the Holy Spirit in our witnessing? We can't convince the world of these things. But the Spirit can.

**III: Shai Linne's mom, "I'm not arguing with you anymore; I'm going to pray for the Holy Spirit to change your heart."**

- We must present the gospel to people prayerfully.
- It is not merely a matter of having better arguments than unbelievers!
- The Spirit alone convicts people of sin and draws them to Jesus Christ.

### **#3: He Reveals the Truth and Exalts the Son (16:12-15)**

Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit's role in revealing the truth to the disciples.

- Jesus promise here has **nothing to do with who one should marry or what job you should take** (though the Spirit can work to guide and direct believers).
- The primary application is to the apostles, who will be led **into the truth about Jesus** (which they had a hard time understanding before his glorification), and they will be led to know **the significance of Jesus' work**, thus resulting in their preaching and eventually the writing of Holy Scripture.
- Like **John 14:26**, this text serves **as sort of a pre-authentication of the New Testament writers**.
- Guidance into all the truth does not mean that the disciples would have every bit of knowledge in the universe! **Speed of light, DNA, etc.**
- The **"truth"** refers to the whole truth regarding Jesus; and the implications of it; **now in this body of teaching we have in Scripture.**
- If we don't understand these verses properly, then there are grounds for all kinds of whack teaching.

#### **A. The Spirit of Truth (v. 12-13)**

**12:** He says he has "I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them."

So there are **more words to come**.

- There was more teaching to come.
- Jesus had more to teach them.
- 14:26 – involved the Spirit enabling them to **"remember"** what Jesus taught.
- Here, he says the Spirit will lead them into **supplemental revelations**.
- But these two verses work together.
- Inspired by the Spirit, the disciples would recall Jesus' words and pen them, and the Spirit would also help them see the significance of Christ's work, and pen those things too.

**13a:** "When the Spirit of truth comes"

- The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of **Truth**.
- He will continue the ministry of teaching (cf. **15:26; 14:26; 14:17**)

**13b:** “he will guide you into **all the truth**”

- **As the days go by, he will lead the disciples into a deeper knowledge of the truth about himself.**
- **He will show you the whole Christian way.**
- **While again this text serves to give us a preview of the process of inspiration; a secondary application is that the Spirit illuminates our mind to understand that which is written.**
- **He has revealed the truth in a book *objectively*; and he illuminates our minds to know it and experience it *subjectively/experientially*.**
- **It is this latter point that Matthew Henry speaks of:**
  - “**To be led into the truth is more than barely to know it; it is to be intimately and experientially acquainted with it; not only to have the notion of it in our heads, but relish and savor the power of it in our hearts**” (Matthew Henry)
- **We should seek that: to relish and savor the power of it in our hearts.**

**13c:** “for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak”

- **The Spirit is in harmony with the Godhead.**
- He is the **Serving Spirit**; He will declare what is given. He is the **Communicating Spirit**.
- “The things to come” – the immediate events and the ramifications.

## **B. The Christ-Centered Spirit (14-15)**

- **One final time, we see that the Holy Spirit is the Christocentric Spirit (cf., 15:26).**
- **Through the years we’ve heard of outrageous things done in the name of the Spirit from *barking in the Spirit to vomiting in the Spirit*.**
- **But here we see the “central aim of the Spirit” (Carson): **to glorify Christ**.**
- **He draws attention to Jesus, not himself** (some call the Holy Spirit “the shy” member of the Trinity; that can be misunderstood – but the point is he is magnifying the Son).
- **He does this as he reveals sin and leads us to Jesus; **he does this through the pages of the written word, of which Christ is the hero.****
- **The Spirit has the floodlight ministry, glorifying Christ.**
- **The Spirit is not offended that we focus on Jesus!**
- **If you are exalting Jesus it is a gift of the Spirit!**
- Verse 15 does not mean that he exalts Jesus to the exclusion of the Father; **the Father and Son are united, and there’s no rivalry between them.** The Father delights in the Son, the Son delights in the Father. **But in the divine economy, the Son makes known the Father and glorifies the Father, and the Spirit makes known and glorifies the Son.**

**16:** There is no division in the Godhead.

- **It is the things of the Father and the Son that the Spirit takes and declares. Once again he is the serving Spirit, and the communicating Spirit.**
- **The Father and the Son are united, just as they are united with the Spirit in this work of revelation.**



## Three Applications (on v. 12-15)

### 1. Do not pit the Spirit against the Word

- The Bible is the Spirit's book. (Acts 1:16; Heb 3:7;
- The Spirit is the Spirit of truth.
- **It does not grieve the Spirit to study the Scriptures diligently, to understand who Jesus is, what he did, and what he said. No, that honors the Spirit!**
- **Acts 2:42** – what happens when the Spirit comes? Do they stop studying Scripture! No! That's precisely what they begin doing. Now, the Spirit illuminates.
- We need both **"light and heat."** We need the Spirit and the Word.
- Pray for the Spirit's presence in your life to be more real and for you to grow in grace by the Spirit; pray for his work in your family and in the church. And pray for the Spirit to help you know the truth of Scripture and live it out.

### 2. Remember that the Spirit-Inspired Word is our chief source for detecting error.

**This "new" revelation is confined to the Apostles.**

- This is important because what people have done through the years is this:
  - "We have a new revelation" – a new book, etc? Wrong!
  - "God has revealed that we should read things differently today."
  - Bucket 1 (never was God's will), 2 (it's not anymore), 3 (it's timeless). It's all 3!
- **No, the Spirit will lead these disciples into all truth – that is everything you need to know about life and godliness; about Jesus and his significance will be preserved in Holy Scripture.**
- This is why the claims of cult groups that claim there is continuing revelation being given are wrong.

**The Christocentric Spirit** is important because it tells us to remember that the Spirit is not magnifying men and women, but Christ.

So, then when it comes to cults and erroneous positions on the Holy Spirit, we must ask these questions:

- **Is this action consistent with the revealed truth of Scripture, the Scripture inspired by the Spirit?**
- **Does this action magnify Jesus Christ? Does it draw attention to Jesus Christ?**

### 3. Study the Christ-Centered Word to know the truth and to be captivated by Christ.

- "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly."
- Study to see Christ and be changed.
- I preach so that he you may see him.
- "Him we proclaim... that we may present everyone *mature* in Christ" (Col 1:28-29)
- This is how we mature, by seeing him.

**Closing Reflections: Do You Want More of the Spirit's Work in Your Life?**

1. Do you have the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9)?

- You can be religious like Nicodemus but not be born again!
  - Don't remain in that condition! Go to Jesus like Nicodemus and seek transformation.
2. **If you want more of the Spirit's work in your life, practice repentance.**
    - Ask the Spirit to show you your sin and confess it and turn from it.
    - Don't let sin reign in your heart.
    - **The Spirit is a person who can be grieved - grieved by our sin. Like any person we offend, we seek forgiveness or order to restore fellowship, intimacy and joy.**
  3. **If you want more of the Spirit's work in your life, meditate on the Scriptures and ask the Spirit to captivate you by the beauty of Jesus.**
  4. **If you want more of the Spirit's work in your life, practice the "one anothers."**
    - The Spirit is at work not just in individuals but in his people.
    - And he uses other Christians to encourage you and strengthen you by the Spirit. Speak of Christ with one another.
    - Sing to one another.
  5. **Ask the Father to fill you with the Spirit afresh everyday.**
    - Luke 11 – you who are evil can give good gifts, how much more can the Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.
    - Ask him to gift you, strengthen you, and empower you.
    - Go out with confidence as you bear witness to Jesus, the Spirit is the one who convicts and glorifies Christ in the hearts of unbelievers. Ask him to bear witness through you.

**All of this made possible because Jesus did depart and go to the Father.**

**He lived a perfect life.**

**Died on our behalf.**

**Was raised in power and glory.**

**And he poured his blessed Holy Spirit in us.**

**Let us walk by the Spirit.**