



Discussion Guide

Spirit: John 16.4b-15

Getting Started: 10 minutes

- o When in life have you known that someone was truly “for” you? What led you to this realization?
- o Optional: What, if anything from the sermon, encouraged, challenged, or really made you think?

Setting the Stage: *Forgiven. Cleansed. In a new place, a right place, the place we were meant to be. How wonderful the work of God’s grace in the person of Jesus. How incredible to think that God loved us enough to pursue us even as we fled from Him. How magnificent must be this God who would push past our defenses, our claims of self-sufficiency, our attempts at godhood to bring us rescue. There is just one problem. Maybe I am the only one that notices, but by the look of things I don’t think I am. I may be forgiven. I may be in a new standing with God, but I am still unable to live rightly with him. No matter how hard I try, I still seem to drift back to my delusions of self-sufficiency and godhood. It seems I need something more than forgiveness. It seems that I need something that can orient and empower me to live in light of the standing I have with God. It seems that I am still in need of God, not God in a one-time shot of forgiveness but God in an ongoing, ever-present way, a way that leads me to live as I cannot live on my own.*

Diving Into the Text: 60 minutes (The following questions are intended to provide your group with a simple road map through the text. Feel free to use these questions in ways that best fit your group and the dynamics of your own meeting.)

- Read John 16.4b-15. (*Leader tip: You may want to provide context for this passage using John 15.1-16.4a and the Context and Background notes.*)
- What roles does the Advocate/Holy Spirit fill?
- The term “Advocate” refers to one who comes up alongside us to be “for” us. In what ways do the roles of the Spirit support the use of this term? (*Leader tip: You can find more about the term “Advocate” in the Group Notes.*)
- Considering the roles of the Holy Spirit, why might it be better for Jesus to leave so that the Advocate might come? (John 16.7)
- When we consider the roles of the Spirit, they point to one who is meant to lead us to life. By what means do you see people seeking life today? What is your evaluation of these means?
- By what means are you seeking life? What might an honest evaluation of these means say?
- What role does the Spirit/Advocate have in your search? Can you elaborate?
- What might a life led and empowered by the Spirit look like?
- What steps might you be willing to take to move to a Spirit-led life?

Wrapping Up: 20 minutes

- o Prayer requests
- o Group prayer time
- o House-keeping matters (assignments for the next meeting)



Group Notes

Spirit: Discussion Guide

John 16.4b-15

Context and Background

Context for a final discussion: The conversation Jesus is having with his disciples about the Holy Spirit is actually part of a much larger conversation, one that is his final conversation with them before his arrest and crucifixion (John 13.1-17.26). This conversation falls into two main parts, a conversation at supper (John 13-14) and a conversation on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane (John 15-17). In both, conversations, Jesus is preparing his disciples for his arrest and subsequent death. We might view Jesus' words as his final charge to his disciples. As Jesus and his disciples left their meal and began traveling to the Garden, Jesus instructed them that they were to continue his work by remaining in his love. This was his command to them, that they love one another (John 15.9-17). However, Jesus indicated that the ability to carry on his work was dependent upon a deep relationship with himself. Apart from being intimately connected with Jesus, the disciples would find themselves unable to do anything (John 15.1-8). Jesus warned them that as they carried on his work, it would be difficult. The disciples would face persecution, something that up to this point Jesus has absorbed for them (John 15.18-16.4a). These words alone would have been enough to cause deep thought among the disciples. However, the seriousness of Jesus' words is compounded by his repeated statement that he is going away (John 14.1-5, 28-31; 16.5). One can imagine the disciples' wonder and consternation at the repetition of this phrase. How were they to endure hardship and carry on the work of Jesus in his absence, particularly if doing so required an intimate connection with him? Jesus provides solace in the words of our present text. Rather than leaving the disciples completely alone, he will send an Advocate (Holy Spirit-Jn 14.26). This Advocate will work for the world and for the disciples. He will work for the world by convicting them of the futility of their way of living and urging repentance (Jn 16.8-11). He will work for the disciples by leading them into the life that Jesus has for them (Jn 16.12-15). Most importantly, the Spirit who leads will be none other than Jesus himself (Jn 16.14). Thus, the disciples can endure persecution and remain connected to Jesus through the Advocate/Spirit.

Advocate: The word "Advocate" or "Counselor" is used to translate the word *paraclete* for which we have no real English equivalent. The term is actually a legal term referring to one who advocates for the accused party. Literally, one who "stands beside." Jesus used this term to refer to the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14.26). With the use of this term we perhaps see much about the intended role of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is one who comes up alongside us and joins us in our own story. He is one who is 'for' us, one who there to help us and lead us past and through that which stands against us. In the New Testament letters, we see many of these ideas fleshed out in greater detail. Here is a brief list of some of the main roles of the Holy Spirit which portray Him as one who comes alongside us to be 'for' us: the Spirit sets people free from sin and death so they might have life (Rom. 8.1-2); comforts, reassures God's people that they are His children (Rom. 8.15-17; helps believers in their weakness by praying for them (Rom. 8.26); equips Christians to join God in service (1 Cor. 12); brings about a transformed life in the actions of a believer (Gal. 5.22); provides assurance of the future work of God in the life of a Christian (Eph. 1.14).

Connecting the dots of *The Story*: At this point in the story we have seen that though people are by nature utterly rebellious, God has chosen to bring forgiveness and new life through His Son Jesus. In the faithful orientation of one's life around Jesus, one finds forgiveness, a fresh start and new relationship with God. What one does not find is the power to live in this new standing with God. Knowing this, God chose to send His Spirit to live with us and in us. The purpose of the Spirit is to empower and enable us to live in our new relationship with God. The Spirit enables us to live in light of the forgiveness we have received in Christ.

The Text

Hope in sadness (John 16.4b-7) The disciples of Jesus have heard him say that they are to carry on his work and that doing so will be difficult for they will face persecution. In order to be successful in carrying on what Jesus has begun, they must maintain an intimate relationship with Jesus, something that seems impossible as Jesus is going away (*See Context for a final discussion*). The disciples are able only to grieve at Jesus' words. However, Jesus notes that his going away is actually a good thing. If he did not go away then the Advocate would not come. Jesus has to go away so that he might send the Advocate to his followers (Jn. 7.39). The disciples cannot have both Jesus and the Advocate, and according to Jesus, to have the Advocate is much better (*See Advocate*).

Hope for the world (John 16.8-11): Jesus states that the Advocate will work on behalf of the world. Here we see how having the Advocate/Spirit is better. The Spirit can work with the entire world, something Jesus could not do for as a person he was limited to his present space and time. The Spirit's work with the world is in respect to conviction that leads to repentance. The verb Jesus uses speaks not only of pointing out wrong but of pointing out wrong so that one might acknowledge this wrong and change. The wrong to be acknowledged has to do with the present way the world functions. The Spirit will show the world that they are out of place in life (sin) as long they are not in relationship with Jesus. He will show them that Jesus truly was who he said he was, that Jesus was treated unjustly (righteousness). This truth will be seen in Jesus' going away. Finally, the Spirit will show the world that the present world system is condemned and passing away because of what Jesus has done. The Spirit provides people a way of seeing the world and life as it is so that they might turn to Christ and find true life.

Hope for God's people (John 16.12-15): The Spirit provides hope for the disciples for he will guide them into truth. Truth can be seen here as the life God intends for His people, the life found in the very person of Jesus (John 14.6). The Spirit provides the guidance that Jesus did while present. He does this by speaking the very words of Jesus to the disciples. Though the disciples are not ready in the present moment to understand all that Jesus desires for them, with the Spirit they have the hope that they will have the continued guidance of Jesus, both to continue his work and to face the persecution that will come in Jesus' absence.

Application: We have a new standing, a new identity in Christ. We are forgiven, reconciled to God by grace. The question now is how do we live? You see, the problem is that we are still rebellious, powerless to live as God has called us to live, even as those who have been forgiven. Jesus knew this. In fact, he stated that the only way we could ever be the people he was calling us to be was in an intimate relationship with him. We needed his guidance, his encouragement, his empowerment to truly live. How do we have that when Jesus isn't around physically? Enter the Spirit. In the Spirit we have one who comes up alongside us, leading us to life as God intended it. In the Spirit we find ourselves drawn to God and empowered to live His life. We find these things in the Spirit for in the Spirit we experience and find Jesus.

