

John 14:15-21 The Promise Given to Troubled Hearts

1. We are now getting into the heart of Jesus' teaching on the person and work of the Holy Spirit. The concept of the Holy Spirit often creates a whole lot of confusion amongst followers of Jesus. Why do you think that is?

This is simply a question to get out on the table the beliefs around the Spirit that are present within the group. It would be important to perhaps even articulate up front that this is the goal of this question so that what is believed can be articulated to guide this and subsequent studies. Invite and create a posture of non-judgment in this free expression of conviction for it will serve your ongoing discussion well. As you get a sense of what beliefs are present within the group you as leader will then be able to facilitate the conversations in the coming weeks with a deeper understanding of the preconceptions that are present – where you may need to press in.

Jesus continues to speak to troubled hearts. To troubled hearts he paints a picture of a glorious future using marital imagery (14:2-3). He points to a marriage of heaven and earth – where our world would be shot through with the beauty, love, justice, and peace of God. The disciples are invited to live in anticipation of that future in all that they do and say and pray (14:5-14). They are understandably full of questions, how can we do that without your presence, your power, your work, you showing us the father? This passage is Jesus' answer to those questions.

Read John 14:15-21

2. The passage reads like a set of conditions (a series of if / then statements). This can feel like it is heaping upon us a set of expectations that we could not possibly attain. One of the commentators (D.A. Carson) invites us to see them not as a set of conditions but as a set of essential relations. God's love of us, our love of God, our obedience to his commands are all inter-related. How does this insight fill out your understanding of the life of following Jesus?

One particular passage to press in on if your group struggles to see it not as a set of conditions but as relations would be 1 John 2:1-2 – "we love because he first loved us" – as we know God's love we will in turn love. Love is not a feeling nor a verbal profession (though it may include those things), love is borne out in action – doing what pleases the Father, doing the things that Jesus did.

It is often the case that many people live the life of following Jesus being motivated by two things – fear and pride.

- A. *Fear that if I don't live up to the commands of Jesus I will either not get the blessings of God, or I will be punished.*
- B. *Pride that if I don't do the things Jesus asks of me I will be like "those" people and I don't want to be like 'those' people.*

The life of following Jesus, obedience to his commands, is meant to be motivated by love and gratitude. As we see all that he has done for us, dying in our place, winning for us

new life and the promise of eternal life we are thus motivated by gratitude to respond by doing what pleases God.

All of these pieces are inter-related they don't exist in isolation from one another.

To fill out the conversation a little perhaps consider asking – what happens if you took one of these things away – what would the life of following Jesus look like as a result?

This set of essential relations is all held together by a gift, a gift from the father, a gift of another helper (vs. 16). The Holy Spirit is first described here as a "helper". The strict translation of this word "paraclete" which means to "stand and argue alongside". Jesus says that the Spirit is another Helper – that he is the first (See 1 John 2:1-2). Jesus pleads our case before the Father, while the Spirit does that work on our hearts.

3. Jesus first describes the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Truth. He has just called himself "the truth" (14:6). The Holy Spirit then is to press the truths of who Jesus is and what he has done for us home to our hearts. Can you describe a time where you have experienced yourself of heard from others this work of the Spirit?

This is simply a personal reflection piece. The goal is this: I think many people have experiences of the Holy Spirit and don't know it as such. It may come from a truth being said in the liturgy, biblical text, song that all of a sudden comes home – the penny drops – head and heart connect.

It could come when a bible verse all of a sudden comes into our remembrance at that perfect moment to shape our decision making or perspective on a situation.

It could come when someone else reminds us of a truth of Jesus in their support of us that makes an impression beyond the force of their words.

Or other ways as they come up...

As we hear the stories from one another it can help us see them in our own lives.

As this will require some openness on the part of your group have a story or two prepared of your own to share to spark others in their reflection.

4. (vs 16) I will not leave you as orphans. Literally this means I will not leave you without a Father. **Read Romans 8:14-17.** It appears that one of the primary works of the Holy Spirit is to bring home to us the love of God as Father. Why is this so vital to these essential relations? Or put another way - how does knowing the love of the Father shape our love of God and our obedience?

Perhaps these reflections on the nature of God's love would provide triggers for deeper conversation...

Jesus summarized the law in this way – love God with all your heart soul mind and strength and love your neighbour as yourself. The law of God is all about love, and how do we love? The law of God reveals the specifics of how we are to love.

God's love for us – we who were far from God – enemies in our sin – shapes our love of the "other" whomever that other is.

The one who is loved by God not based on anything that they have done (that is by grace) is free to extend love to others without expecting anything in return.

5. (vs. 16-17) How does the fact that the Holy Spirit will dwell within you and never leave you impact your daily life?

1 Corinthians 6 gives an example of the application of this truth – your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. What we do with our bodies matters for we are the residence of the living God. In this case Paul is referencing matters of sexual immorality – but this could be extended to what we eat / drink / watch / read / say. I have been in settings where this has been used negatively – don't do this because God lives within you – which has its place – but there is also a positive in this – consider the glory of having the living God dwell within you and so honour what God pleases to dwell within – he considers it sacred – honour it as such.

The very presence of God in Jesus will remain with me – and nothing I can do or say will chase him away. He is present with me in the joys and in the sorrows – in the highs and in the lows. I am not alone...

6. How do we receive all the benefits of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

We receive the benefit of the "another" advocate by receiving the first – Jesus.

Paul will often invite his readers to go on being filled with the Spirit – and warn them not to quench the work of the Spirit. Perhaps if time allows this question can be filled out by reflected on how we can go on being filled by the Spirit – and some of the ways we quench the Spirit within us...

Go on being filled – ask for the Spirit's work – when the Spirit does begin to move respond in obedience – if the Spirit is all about revealing Jesus participate in that work by going to scripture and deepening in your understanding of Jesus

Don't quench? – turn away from sin – don't block the nudging of the Spirit toward obedience – turn away from self-reliance