



THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

**LIFE GROUPS
LEADER GUIDE
AUGUST 2021**

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of John</i>
	AUGUST 1	21

JESUS PROMISES THE HOLY SPIRIT

JOHN 14:15-31

AUGUST 1, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying John 14:15-31. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: JESUS PROMISED TO SEND “ANOTHER HELPER,” THE HOLY SPIRIT, TO HIS FOLLOWERS.

WHY IT’S IMPORTANT: THE SAME SPIRIT THAT RAISED JESUS FROM THE DEAD DWELLS WITHIN CHRISTIANS.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: FAITH IN JESUS, THROUGH HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION, IS THE MEANS BY WHICH HIS FOLLOWERS GAIN ACCESS TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 Share about a time when you felt inadequate or ill equipped for a task.
- 2 Why do we sometimes feel inadequate to serve the Lord?
- 3 How can we overcome such feelings of inadequacy?

The Holy Spirit, like Jesus, is co-equal and co-eternal with God, and yet is distinct from the other two persons of the Trinity in His work. Though we often feel inadequate to be used by God for His kingdom, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to indwell believers for the express purpose of empowering us to be His witnesses. (See Acts 1:8.) Today we will see how we can find confidence to be used by God for His kingdom and glory, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 14:15-17.

- What comes to mind when you think of the Holy Spirit?
- Who is the Holy Spirit and what does the Holy Spirit do? (See John 14:26, 15:26; 16:10.)

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity; He indwells Christ-followers and is the presence and power of God in their lives. The Holy Spirit helps us understand Jesus and remember His teaching. (See John 14:26.) The Spirit bears witness to Jesus (see John 15:26) and will convict the world of sin, righteousness, and God's judgment. (See John 16:10.)

Notes:

- Why must we not think of the Holy Spirit as a power or a force?
- Why do we need "another Counselor" to help us keep His commands? How does the Holy Spirit help us?

Jesus knows that on our own, we will fail to keep His commandments. We are sinful, and even when we try to obey the Lord, we are often not wise enough to know exactly what to do to please the Lord in a situation. Therefore, the Lord Jesus didn't leave us alone; He sent us the Holy Spirit to indwell us. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will "glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you" (John 16:14).

- When Jesus told the disciples He would send "another," He used the word that meant another of the same kind. The counselor will be like Jesus Himself. In what ways is the Holy Spirit like Jesus?
- How is the Holy Spirit our "advocate" (v. 16)? In what ways does the Spirit help us in our walk with Christ?

The Greek word for "advocate" in verse 16 is *Paracletos*, and it is used to describe an comforter or a counselor. (See John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7.) The original meaning is "working on someone's behalf" or "coming alongside someone."

The Counselor picked up where Jesus left off after His ascension. While Jesus physically walked the earth for a very short time, the “another” Counselor will be with us forever. He will remain our Advocate for eternity.

Notes:

The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force or power, but a person. The Holy Spirit is eternally God sent from the Father, by the Son to indwell believers as their Counselor, Guide, and Friend.

The Holy Spirit knows the mind of Christ because He, like Jesus, is fully God. The Holy Spirit ministers to us by reminding us of the teachings of Christ, by convicting us of our sins, and by guiding us through the Word so we will know how to respond to everyday situations.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 14:18-31.

- How does verse 18 speak to our identity as God’s children?

- What does it tell us about how we should view God?

Jesus’ sending the Holy Spirit is confirmation of our identity as God’s children. Whereas orphans have no parents, children identify with their parents in a number of ways. On a most basic level, children take their parents’ name. As children of God, we have the Holy Spirit and are called to identify ourselves solely with God. On a more personal level, we know God never abandons us. We know we will face some tough times in this life, but we also know we never have to face them alone.

- What words or phrases from verses 19-21 offer confidence to children of God?

- As children of God, we not only have a relationship with God but also a responsibility to Him. What responsibility did Jesus mention specifically in verse 21?

Notes:

Obedience to Jesus is evidence of love for Him and relationship with Him. The word “if” in verse 15 suggests reality, not a conditional relationship between love for Jesus and keeping His commandments. Jesus did not link works of obedience and salvation. Rather, He emphasized keeping His commandments as the natural outgrowth of love for Him. The one who knows Jesus’ commands and keeps them confirms his or her love relationship with Jesus. Those who love Jesus enjoy the reciprocal love of Jesus’ Father. Jesus loves and reveals Himself to the one who loves and obeys the Father. In a relationship with Jesus, obedience validates professions of love.

- If you love Jesus, what can you expect from God? What will happen to you if you love Jesus (v. 25)?
- Why is it important that we ask the Spirit for wisdom and guidance as we study God’s Word (v. 26)?

Earlier in this passage, Jesus said He would “ask the Father, and He will give you another advocate” (v. 16). Here, Jesus promised not only will the Holy Spirit abide with us, but also the “Father will love them, and we [Father, Son, and Holy Spirit] will come to them and make Our home with them” (John 14:23). In 1 John 2:23, John taught that “no one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.” If we love Jesus, we are in fellowship with the entire Trinity of God.

The Lord Jesus asks the Father, and the Father sends to us the Holy Spirit on behalf of Jesus Christ. This gracious action of our Lord ensures that we will receive “the Spirit ... [who] brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’” (Rom. 8:15). The Holy Spirit confirms to us that we are God’s children and because of this, we have the ability and boldness to live as Christ calls us to live.

Notes:

- Why might the disciples have needed peace after everything Jesus said leading up to this point?
- How does the Holy Spirit give us peace in troubled times?
- How have you experienced this personally?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Notes:

- How might reminding yourself that the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you change the way you approach your walk with Christ?
- How might relying on the Spirit's power help you overcome feelings of inadequacy?
- What is one area of your life in which you need to rely on the power of the Spirit to help you glorify God?

PRAY

Close in prayer, thanking God for the gift of the Holy Spirit who has come to instruct us, remind us, and guide us in the way of Jesus.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - Truth comes from Jesus, is given to us by His Word, and is taught to us by His Spirit. What role do the Word and the Spirit play in your life?
 - How are you seeking to rely on the Holy Spirit more this week?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize John 14:26.

- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: John 15:1-17.

JOHN 14:15-31

14:15–18. How do people know that they are Christians? How do you and I gain confidence that we are born again by the regenerating power of God’s Holy Spirit? The world cannot know because the world cannot accept the Holy Spirit. But the disciples were told that the Holy Spirit lives with you and will be in you. Pentecost was still in their future, so at the present time the Holy Spirit was constantly with them. But after Pentecost, he would actually be in them and in every other believer since that day. Consequently, they were identifiable (as we are) as God’s children, not orphans.

Notes:

What did Jesus mean by the promise at the end of verse 18: I will come to you? Some interpreters suggest this refers to the resurrection while others see another promise of the second coming. But in the context of these verses, it surely means the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Jesus lives in us through the person and power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit lives in us to identify his children. The doctrine of the indwelling Holy Spirit does not rest completely on this passage, but verse 17 is of great significance. Of this important verse Gromacki writes:

First, the spirit was dwelling “with” the apostles in the Gospel era. In Greek the words “with you” literally mean “beside you.” In that sense, the Holy Spirit had a companion ministry to the apostles. He was beside them, but not inside them.

Second, Christ predicted that the Spirit would be in them. After the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, the same Spirit who was beside them would be inside them.

Not only that, but this indwelling will be endless—the new Counselor will be with you forever. No orphans in the family of God, no abandoned people with no place to turn. The Holy Spirit will be a constant presence of Jesus with all believers.

14:19–21. How well we remember the song that states, “Because he lives I can face tomorrow; because he lives all fears are gone.” Perhaps the idea for the lyrics had its birth in John 14:19. When did the disciples (later called the apostles) realize that Jesus was in the Father and that they dwelt in him? Did they have to wait for the second coming for that? Of course not. The reference to that day must refer to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. That frightened, hesitant group of believers huddled in an upper room knew the power of the Holy Spirit broke forth upon them because it literally blasted them around the city, around the country and around their world.

Notes:

But notice again the emphasis on behavior. A person does not show that the Holy Spirit lives in him by bizarre behavior or belief, but by knowing and obeying the commands of the Lord Jesus. How desperately we need balance in the church. Making too much of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit leads to mysticism; making too little of him leads to legalism. Only the balance can lead to unity. How like sinful human beings to divide the church over the Holy Spirit, sent by God to unite us.

As we might expect, interpreters have debated the meaning of the words on that day, although the context seems to point to the resurrection.

14:22–24. The Holy Spirit lives actively in us all the time; we do not need to pray for him to come to a certain meeting, or a certain occasion, or at a certain time. He is not some kind of theological or spiritual helicopter looking for a place to land.

The disciples always wanted to know why Jesus treated them differently than he did the world, and we find that question again in verse 22. But the answer is always the same. Jesus reveals himself to people he knows will respond to him and obey his teaching. The key word of these three verses is obey or perhaps even the phrase obey my teaching. Again the Lord linked himself with the Father and indicated that the Father and the Son through the Spirit take up residence in the lives of believers.

Judas is also mentioned in Luke 6 and Acts 1 but only here does he speak. Likely he is the same person as the Thaddaeus of Matthew 10:3 and Mark 3:18. His interruption, like those of Thomas and Philip, reminds us not only that the disciples were confused about all this doctrine, but also that they felt comfortable enough in the presence of the Lord to interrupt him with questions. But what is the answer to his question? Quite simply, love. The obedient children of the Father receive the Holy Spirit who will manifest (show) Jesus to them, although his true nature will still be hidden from the world.

Notes:

14:25–27. The Holy Spirit reminds us of truth that Jesus taught. In the case of the disciples, it was an immediate application to their spiritual memories. In our case, it is assistance in understanding and applying the Word of God. In their lives and ours, constant awareness of the Spirit's presence is a daily practicality.

But Jesus also promised peace. Verse 27 reminds us of the early verses of this chapter: Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you ... Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. Let us remember that these were troubled, frightened disciples. They needed assurance of peace. But they were not peculiar in that need. Peace of spirit and mind is an essential part of a healthy home, a healthy workplace, and a healthy life. But only those who have peace with God can have the peace of God.

14:28–29. Here it is again—that constant nagging reminder to the disciples that Jesus would leave them. But this time he actually told them they should be glad. And when the Lord said, the Father is greater than I, he did not imply any denial of deity. Jesus was going back to heaven to take his appropriate role as our advocate by the Father's throne. But he would not leave his people alone on earth, so he sent the Holy Spirit to live the life of Jesus in the disciples and in us.

The Holy Spirit teaches us by strengthening our faith to trust the Father. We have no competence in ourselves for Christian living, parenting, teaching, or leading. Second

Corinthians 3 could not be clearer: “Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor. 3:4–6).

Notes:

14:30–31. The Holy Spirit also strengthens our faith to witness to the world. Jesus told the disciples, the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me. Would not it be wonderful if we could say exactly the same thing about our lives? Imagine a Christian father asked by a little child, “Daddy, why do we give money to missionaries?” and the dad responds, “Sweetheart, it’s because the world must learn that we love the Father and we do exactly what the Father has commanded.” Perhaps a mother who has forgiven a child for the fifth or sixth time in the same day is asked why she is so patient and loving and she can reply the same way. That is what it means to have another Counselor in our lives.

The last phrase, Come now; let us leave, indicates that the upper room portion of the Lord’s teaching was finished. They probably walked out into the garden, and chapter 15 continues in that outdoor setting.

This dynamic passage ought to leave us with several crucial questions. How do we practice the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives? How do we guard against sinning in ways that offend the Holy Spirit such as quenching or grieving him? How do we flesh out the kind of demonstration the world must see to know that Jesus is alive and living in us through the Holy Spirit?

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of John</i>
	AUGUST 8	21

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

JOHN 15:1-17

AUGUST 8, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying John 15:1-17. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: IN JOHN 15, JESUS TOLD HIS DISCIPLES TO “REMAIN” IN HIM. WHAT JESUS WAS ASKING THEM TO DO WAS TO STICK WITH HIM AND INCREASE IN INTIMACY AND KNOWLEDGE OF HIM. THIS IS THE PATH TO OBEDIENCE AND GROWTH.

WHY IT’S IMPORTANT: BY REMAINING IN JESUS, WE GROW TO KNOW HIM BETTER AND LEARN TO OBEY.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: WE ARE ABLE TO ABIDE IN JESUS THROUGH HIS LIFE, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 Who is the one person you know best? How long have you known them?

- 2 How does your deepening knowledge of that person help you understand them better and anticipate how they will respond in different situations?

Jesus invited twelve men to know Him, follow Him, and go on mission with Him. As these men grew to know Jesus better, they began to love Him more and became more willing to do what He asked them. We see this in our own lives all the time. Those we know and love the most are those we spend time with and those we seek to please. They are the people we would do anything for. As we stick with Jesus and get to know Him better, we love Him more and the fruit of that love is obedience.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 15:1-5.

- What is spiritual “fruit,” according to the Scriptures? How is spiritual fruit produced in our lives?

- How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus said they could do nothing without Him? How do you try to do things without Jesus? How has that worked out in your life?

If you told one of your friends they could do nothing without you, that would be pretty arrogant. When Jesus said the same thing to His disciples, it was freeing. Obeying Jesus and pursuing Him is difficult, and if the disciples had to do this on their own they would never succeed or bear fruit. Fruit is the evidence of faith and repentance in the life of a Christ-follower, and it cannot be produced apart from Christ. As a branch detached from a vine will wither and fail to produce fruit, so will a disciple disconnected from the true vine. As we stay attached to the vine, we grow to know Jesus in deeper and deeper ways.

Notes:

The process of pruning involves cutting away dead branches that are hindering the growth of a tree or vine. Therefore, this metaphor refers to the numerous means God uses in our lives to cut away what is dead or sinful in us so that we might grow spiritually. As disciples of Christ, pruning might include suffering (see Rom. 5:1-4), discipline (see Heb. 12:7-11), accountability (see Jas. 5:16), or correction from God's Word (see 2 Tim. 3:16-17). In each instance of pruning, it is Jesus who causes us to bear fruit as we remain in Him.

- How do our relationships change as we get to know people better?

- As you get to know people better, why does that typically come with the permission to speak truth into their lives? How does this work as we get to know Jesus and each other better?

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 15:6-11.

- What did Jesus promise all who remain in Him (v. 7)? What confidence and hope does this give you in pursuing Jesus?

- What is necessary for God to be pleased with you as a believer? How does the answer to this question free you from burdens and guilt?

Notes:

- Re-read verse 8 and then read 1 Corinthians 10:31. How does remaining in Jesus glorify God? What changes about our lives when we do everything to the glory of God?

When the chief priority of our lives is to glorify God, remaining in Jesus will be our ultimate experience of joy and delight. As we remain in Him, His wants become our wants, and His heart our heart. When we approach God in prayer, He will give us whatever we wish because our will is aligned with His. Once we are connected to the vine in unhindered fellowship, our lives will bear much fruit because fruit is the evidence we are Jesus' disciples.

- What kind of love did Jesus have for His disciples? What kind of love does Jesus have for you?
- Read Hebrews 12:2. What did Jesus' joy motivate Him to do? What can we learn from Jesus about true joy?
- What does it mean for our joy to be full? How does remaining in Jesus make our joy complete?

Jesus had an unfailing love for His disciples—a love that drove Him to endure the cross “for the joy set before him” (Heb. 12:2). Jesus was able to see the joy behind the cross because He was accomplishing all the Father had asked Him to do. It is through this sacrifice that we are even able to abide in Jesus

at all. We enter into relationship with Jesus by grace, through faith in what He did on the cross. The extent to which we enjoy our relationship with God is dependent upon how diligently we remain connected to Jesus. Continuing to pursue Him and obey Him, no matter the cost, is the path to true fulfillment and joy.

Notes:

- Re-read verse 10. What is the link between knowledge, intimacy, and obedience?
- What did their relationship with Jesus lead the disciples to do? What should your relationship with Jesus lead you to do?

Knowledge, love, and obedience are deeply connected. As we know Jesus better, we love Him more and obey Him without reservation. Jesus' disciples understood that He loved them because they saw what that looked like on the cross and it led them to go all over the known world in obedience to His command. Their relationship with Jesus meant so much to them that they wanted everyone else to know Him the same way they did.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 15:12-17.

- Based on these verses, what sort of relationship does Jesus want to have with those who follow Him?
- How did Jesus ask us to demonstrate our obedience to Him? How do we show Him we are His friends?

Love involves sacrifice, and the ultimate sacrifice is that of giving one's life. On the cross, Jesus demonstrated the love He had professed for His disciples. When Jesus said, "You are my friends" (John 15:14), He was emphasizing another dimension of His relationship with His disciples. Such friendship was demonstrated by carrying out Jesus' commands. Friends share matters of the heart. Friends communicate at a far deeper level than casual acquaintances. Jesus did not relate to His followers as a master relates to his servants—He related to them as beloved friends.

Notes:

- When you think about obeying Jesus' command to love others as He loved us, what specific attributes of Jesus' love come to mind?

- What does this teach you about applying the gospel to your friendships?

True friends try to honor the requests made of them. Consequently, a friend of Jesus is one who habitually honors Him and obeys His instruction, specifically His command to love one another as He loved us. The command to love is a summation of the law's requirements. (See Gal. 5:14.) Love is the first virtue listed in Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit. (See vv. 22-23.)

Jesus stated that our love for others should be modeled after His love for us—"as I have loved you" (v. 12). He loves us even when we do not act lovingly toward Him. In other words, His love for us is not conditioned by our responses. He seeks our best interests all the time. We are commanded to love, whether we feel like it or not. We are to follow Jesus' pattern. How can we do that? We do that the same way we can obey any of His commands—by remaining in Him (vv. 1-5).

- Look again at verse 16. What does this verse reveal about your purpose as a follower of Christ? How do you live out that purpose in your relationships?

- What kind of fruit does Christ want us to produce? What resources has He given us to accomplish this purpose?

Notes:

God wants us to love one another, to be His friends, and to keep His commands in part so that we will go out and produce spiritual fruit by applying the gospel in our relationships.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- What can you do to more closely and consistently abide in Christ? How can we as a group intentionally help one another with this effort?
- What are some specific things we can ask God to accomplish through us? What step might He want us to take to accomplish this?
- How does knowing you were chosen by God to be a part of this body of believers affect the way you view the church and your involvement in it?

PRAY

Praise God for choosing to know you and love you. Thank Him for His constant pursuit of you. Ask that your knowledge and love of Jesus would lead you to obey Him in everything He asks you to do, knowing that whatever He asks is for your ultimate good and His glory.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - Do you feel more like Jesus' servant or friend?

 - What can you do in the coming week to develop your friendship with Jesus? Why is it important to remember that we are simultaneously His friends and servants?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize John 15:5.

- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: John 15:18-27.

JOHN 15:1-17

15:1. Though this section of our study is only two paragraphs, it is impossible to separate the components of the analogy that our Lord put forth. They appear as contrasting couplets throughout the passage. First we have the vine and the branches. This was imagery that every Jew would understand. In the Old Testament the vine appeared regularly as a symbol of Israel (Ps. 80:8–10; Isa. 5:1–2, 7; Jer. 2:21). The Father owns the garden, Jesus is the vine, and his followers are the branches.

Notes:

Christ and not the church is the true vine. Branches placed anywhere else are false branches. The word for gardener is *georgos*, the common word for farmer, a role retained by the Father himself. The vine with which these disciples would have been familiar was Israel, described in some detail in Psalm 80. There the psalmist prayed, “Return to us, O God Almighty! Look down from heaven and see! Watch over this vine, the root your right hand has planted, the son you have raised up for yourself” (Ps. 80:14–15).

15:2. Three types of believers are named or inferred in this first part of the chapter: those who bear no fruit, those who bear some fruit and, later in verse 5, those who bear much fruit. The fruit-bearing branches, it would appear from the text of this verse, represent true believers. But to whom does the text refer when it says, he cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit?

This passage is capable of dangerous interpretation, especially when the idea of fruit-bearing centers in evangelism. Some people teach that those who do not win others to Christ will themselves be snatched out of the vine. Such an idea is alien to the teaching of the New Testament. Perhaps Galatians 5:22–23 helps us here: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

Viewing the removed branches as unregenerate professing Christians is not the only possible way of handling the

text. Perhaps it is best not to force every reference in this parable any more than any other but to focus on the pruning.

15:3. The disciples, however, needed neither cutting off nor trimming clean (a nice handling of the Greek word by the NIV) because they had already been cleansed by the Lord's word. One thing is clear at the outset of the chapter: this is not a passage on salvation, a topic John covered in earlier chapters. Here he dealt with requirements for a fruitful life on the part of believers.

15:4. Another key here is the word remain (abide) which appears no fewer than eleven times in the passage. It seems to suggest an effortless resting in the Lord, confident in the promised union between the vine and the true branches.

Furthermore, John used the word remain forty times in his Gospel and twenty-seven more times in his epistles. In the context of this passage, it seems to emphasize an ongoing faith and loving obedience to the Father and the Son that results in fruit. The fruit in this passage seems to focus on spirit-generated behavior of Christians, though again this is not the only interpretation. Many sermons have been preached on emphasizing fruit as other people who have been influenced by the gospel.

This is new covenant thinking. The disciples and all believers since them must give up the idea that true Christianity emphasizes memberships and associations rather than life in Christ through the Spirit. True believers, demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit because the Spirit of God lives in them, are pruned so their fruit will increase.

15:5. Here we have the key verse of the passage, although it only expands what we have already learned on the first paragraph.

Let us go back to the Galatians passage and see how this teaching of John 15 links closely to what Jesus has already said in John 14 about the Holy Spirit: "Those who belong

Notes:

to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other” (Gal. 5:24–26). In my view, John 15 is not a passage on evangelism and the fruit does not describe new believers. This passage probably deals with discipleship and fruit describes godly behavior.

Notes:

15:6. Verse 6 narrows other possible interpretations of verse 2. We struggle a bit with the words, “he cuts off.” But thrown away and withers takes it further than we want to go in any reference to people who may have been true believers at one time. Certainly the words thrown into the fire and burned could never refer to those who were at one time true believers.

15:7–8. The focus of this passage is on the positive side (the branches remaining) and the Lord put aside all reference to branches that are removed. He also indicated that fruit-bearing is to the Father’s glory and that those who bear much fruit demonstrate their relationship to Christ.

The distinctive factor here links an effective prayer life with fruit-bearing.

But John also talked here about complications in the application. Even when we understand the metaphor and grasp the analogy, we struggle with how best to make this work in our own lives. Let us understand Jesus’ words: You are already clean; you must remain in me; your fruit glorifies God. Even in this temporary life, some things remain. The abiding realities of this passage include answered prayer, the Father’s glory, and Jesus’ affirmation of discipleship.

15:9–10. Here we enter one of the great love passages of the New Testament. Six times in the next eleven verses the disciples will be told to love one another. Once again, Jesus placed himself between the Father and the disciples. The Father loves first; then the Son reflects that love; and

we, his people, remain in his love. Remaining in the Lord's love also requires obedience and brings joy.

If we thought that abiding in the vine-like branches constitutes some mystical relationship, we learn immediately that it centers on obedience—a theme that John has emphasized before. And when we obey Christ's commands, we follow his example with the Father.

Notes:

15:11. A new word enters the chapter as the Lord told the disciples he wanted them to experience the joy he had already found in obedience.

15:12–14. Not only do the friends of Jesus remain in his love; they must also obey his commands. These three verses represent a power-packed passage of the New Testament.

John never forgot these words. They appear in various forms throughout his three epistles, particularly the first. John 15:13 is one of the most dramatic verses of the New Testament: Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. But we sometimes forget verse 14 that links friendship with obedience to the command to love. Sometimes Christians get so busy figuring out how they should be loving God that they forget to love one another. In fact, a constant and genuine love for one another would be one way to show love for God. We do well at this point in the Gospel of John to remember Romans 5:8: “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

When we study the imperatives of the four Gospels, we see that Jesus left many commands for his disciples and for us. But this one seems to take precedence over all the others. The central command has nothing to do with doctrine, church size, or the order of worship. It could not be more simple to understand or more difficult to carry out: Love each other as I have loved you.

15:15. The disciples were Jesus' servants, but he wanted to elevate their status to friends. But we must not forget that servant (doulos) was a positive Old Testament concept. The word friend may have shocked the disciples, since in the Bible only Abraham is called God's friend (Jas. 2:23). It is interesting, too, that Jesus linked this friendship with his teaching. These disciples had become Jesus' friends because of what he had shared with them about the Father's truth.

Notes:

We need to remember, particularly in this day of easy language about relationships with God, that the friendship of this passage is not reciprocal. Jesus may call the disciples his friends, but they still address him as Lord and Master. In fact, that is the pattern of the entire Bible.

15:16–17. Verse 16 reminds us again that we do not find God; he finds us. The linking of answered prayer with spiritual fruit in one's life comes at us in Scripture over and over again. The connection with the Galatians passage is important since the first and foremost fruit of the Spirit is love. Lest the disciples misconstrue the nature of the central command, verse 17 repeats it one more time.

In the context of love, this mission for the Master goes on and goes out. These abiding, fruit-bearing, loving branches—Christian believers who obey the Father and the Son—are candidates for answered prayer as these men learned in the following years. Here, the reference to fruit can possibly be stretched to the concept of new converts, although we dare not dismiss the idea of living out the spiritual fruit of Galatians 5 in a lasting way.

Some New Testament scholars believe that verse 17 launches the next section of the chapter rather than closing this one. Loving each other is central to bearing fruit of any kind and will be a significant defense against the onslaught of an evil world.

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of John</i>
	AUGUST 15	21

HATED BY THE WORLD

JOHN 15:18-27

AUGUST 15, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying John 15:18-27. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: FOLLOWING JESUS OFTEN MEANS SUFFERING AND SELF-DENIAL, BUT HE HELPS US LIVE FAITHFULLY IN THE MIDST OF A WORLD THAT IS OFTEN AGAINST US.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: IF WE ARE TO FOLLOW JESUS FAITHFULLY, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE BE PREPARED TO SUFFER ALONG WITH HIM.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: BECAUSE JESUS SUFFERED FOR OUR SAKE ON THE CROSS, WE WILL NEVER BE REJECTED BY GOD NO MATTER HOW MUCH THE WORLD REJECTS US.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 Name some aspects of Christianity that clash with the way of the world.
- 2 How have you experienced the reality of Jesus' words in John 15:18 that the world would hate His disciples?

Jesus began to prepare His followers for the world's forthcoming reaction to Christians. Simply stated, the world's reaction to believers parallels the world's reaction to Him. Jesus felt His followers needed to learn that the world does not value Him or His love; neither does the world value His disciples. As we confess Jesus' true identity, we are often called to suffer for Him. Yet, we can be confident that He is with us and will sustain us to the end.

Jesus is the perfect, sinless Son of God. His salvation enables people to become all that is good, right, and holy. Yet even after we become Christians, the pull of the world back to our selfishness and sin is strong. This is one of the greatest deterrents to our spiritual growth. But only when we reject worldliness and live in obedience to Jesus and His expectations can we truly show Christ to the world.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Notes:

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 15:18-25.

- In verse 18, Jesus stated that the world would hate His disciples. Why is worldliness (living as though one belongs to the world) an enemy of discipleship?

In the New Testament the word *world* refers to those apart from God, those with a system of values that neither acknowledge God nor recognize His teachings. If believers would partner with the world's sin, the world would love us as its own. On the other hand, when Christians live like Christ, their light exposes the darkness around them and the world hates them as a result.

- Where in your own life do you see worldliness having the greatest impact?
- How does growing in discipleship impact worldliness in your life? How, specifically, have you seen this happen?
- What is the relationship between Jesus' teaching in these verses and becoming more like Him as we live as His disciples?

To be persecuted because of Jesus' name is to be opposed because our lives reflect His character. Close association with Christ results in suffering the reproach of Christ. Jesus warned His followers to remember that and not to be disillusioned when persecution came. On the other hand, Jesus' positive

statement of promise is good news. If people obeyed Jesus' teaching, they would obey His followers' teaching also. We can have confidence that some people will accept our teaching of the truths Jesus taught.

Notes:

- How have you personally seen the world's hatred of Christianity or Christians increased over your lifetime? Has this hatred ever been directed toward you? Explain.
- If the world never opposes us, what does that tell us about the degree of worldliness in our lives? Explain.
- How does our reaction to those who oppose us serve as a testimony for or against Jesus' power and grace in us?

Since the world hated Jesus and His Father, it hates His followers. Believers experience antagonism from the world due to their faith and obedience to Jesus. We can draw comfort from knowing such experiences affirm our association with Jesus and our distinction from the world.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 15:26-27.

- In your own words, why was Jesus sending the Holy Spirit (look back at John 14:15-27)?
- Why would Jesus' words regarding the Holy Spirit be a comfort to His disciples in the context of His warning about persecution?

- In this regard, how is He a comfort for us today?

Notes:

- Why is testifying for Jesus so important in the world in which we live?
- How does focusing on this mission help us fight back against the enemies of our personal growth and discipleship?

The Spirit was sent to believers, at least in part, to empower them in testifying about Jesus. We have been given the same mission as the first disciples—witnessing about Jesus. As we confess the truth about Jesus, we move further into the life He called us to, which often includes suffering. Regardless of the sense we might get from the world, we are never alone when testifying about our Savior.

- In verse 27, Jesus said His followers will bear witness to Him. How is abiding in His love connected to bearing witness to Him?

Jesus' disciples will be known by their love for others, while the world will be known by its rejection of Jesus. He warned us of this so that we are not surprised when the world rejects us. Under such stress, hardship, and even persecution, only by abiding in Jesus will a disciple be able to withstand trials; and to these, He will send the Helper (v. 26). Jesus is the true vine; we must remain in Him so that we can withstand the harsh environment and produce fruit.

- What range of emotions do you think the disciples experienced as they heard about the Spirit and were warned of persecution?

- How does the Spirit help us be constant in our faithfulness to the calling of Christ?

Notes:

Jesus warned the disciples of persecution that would come. He identified where it may come from, promised the Spirit, and then warned them. This must have given the disciples a mix of joy and fear. We also have been given the Holy Spirit, our Helper. In light of what Christ did and the gift of the Spirit, we, too, are called to testify about Christ no matter the cost.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- How might you seek joy in the midst of suffering for Jesus' sake?
- What promises has God made to those who persevere until the end? (See Gal. 6:9; 2 Tim. 2:12; Jas. 1:12.)
- How might we as a group seek to encourage one another in the value of confessing the truth about Jesus in all of life, no matter the world's response?

PRAY

Ask the Lord to convict you today of the areas in your life where worldliness has the greatest influence. Pray for the wisdom and strength to take action against those influences. Pray also for the courage to join with the work of the Spirit this week in testifying about Jesus.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - What things in our culture make it difficult to persevere in Christ above everything else? How can our group help each other?
 - What does it look like to be conscious of the world's attitude toward the Christian faith?
 - How does the Spirit help you remain constant in difficult times? What might that look like in a situation you are facing right now?

 - > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

 - > The challenge to memorize John 15:18.

 - > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: John 16:1-33.
-

JOHN 15:18-27

15:18-19 Jesus declared that if the world hated His disciples, they must remember that the world also hated Him. The construction of the first part of this verse in the Greek language indicates certainty that the world would hate Jesus' disciples. There is no doubt about the matter. Jesus was sure of that fact and wanted His followers to be aware of it also. He instructed them to keep in mind that the world hated Him first. The word hates, though it certainly carries strong emotion with it, should not be interpreted only in emotional terms. The verb primarily indicates making a choice to reject and oppose. Jesus' disciples did not belong to the world because He had chosen them out of the world. Because Christians and the world in opposition to Christ are following different Masters and going different directions, believers experience opposition as Christ experienced rejection. The world resists those who do not follow the ways of the world. Christians who daily demonstrate their faith are a reproach to a sinful world.

Notes:

15:20 Jesus instructed the disciples always to remember what He had taught them. The treatment the Master receives determines the treatment the servants can expect. The latter part of verse 20 contains both a warning and a promise. Although the negative element of warning is prominent, the positive statement is also true. Jesus' words leave no question that Jesus was persecuted. Therefore, since the world persecuted Jesus, it will persecute Jesus' followers also. On the other hand, if people obeyed Jesus' teaching, they would obey His followers' teaching also. Again the phrase is stated in such a way as to indicate that some people did indeed obey Jesus' teachings.

15:21 Jesus wanted His disciples to understand why the world in general would reject both Himself and His disciples. The reason was because of His name. In biblical thought a person's name represented that person's character and nature. Those who eventually would carry the name Christian would draw opposition and rejection as Christ did. A root cause of the persecution of believers is traced to the world's ignorance of God. The world at large is ignorant of God (see John 16:3). They may believe in a Supreme Being, but they do not know Him as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

15:22 The disciples also needed to understand the relationship between Jesus' coming and the knowledge of sin. If Jesus had not

come and spoken to the Jews and others, they would not be guilty of sin. But Jesus did come and proclaim God's purposes and plans to them. His message was the good news of salvation that required a turning away from sin and a turning to Jesus as Savior. Had He not come and delivered His message to them, they would still have been sinners, but they would not have been guilty of the sin of rejecting Him as God's Son and the Savior. Christ's coming, however, manifested the rebellion that previously had existed within them. Their sin became imputed to them after they had seen Him and His works (15:24) yet chose to reject Him anyway. They saw and heard and chose not to believe but to reject and crucify Jesus.

Notes:

15:23-25 Anyone who hates Jesus hates His Father as well. In their spiritual blindness, the Jewish religious leaders convinced themselves that resisting Jesus was God's will. However, since God sent Jesus into the world, resisting Jesus means resisting God. What Jesus had done among them encompasses His miracles and teachings. Jesus' works pointed people to spiritual truths and to the reality of who He is. Even though the Jews had seen the miracles, many still hated and rejected both Jesus and His Father. The Jews' rejection of Christ fulfilled the Law, in this context a reference to the Old Testament as a whole.

15:26-27 Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit in light of the coming persecution and the disciples' continuing purpose of testifying for Him. Jesus identified the Holy Spirit as the Counselor. The Greek word is *paraclete*, which literally means "one who is called alongside." The word conveys the idea of one who encourages through being an advocate. The Holy Spirit comforts believers in persecution by remaining alongside them in the midst of their difficulties. The Holy Spirit possesses the same purpose as Jesus, just as He has the same divine nature as Jesus. He who is the Spirit of truth leads believers to be witnesses of the truth. Believers can depend on the Holy Spirit's advocacy to reveal through them the truth about Christ. The Greek word translated testify comes from the same root as "martyr." Through the disciples' verbal testimony, the witness of their lives, and the manner of their deaths, they would testify about Jesus.

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of John</i>
	AUGUST 22	21

JOY IN THE MIDST OF SORROW

JOHN 16:1-33

AUGUST 22, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying John 16:1-33. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: FOLLOWING CHRIST REQUIRES LOOKING TO HIM FOR JOY AND TRUSTING THE SPIRIT FOR STRENGTH IN THE MIDST OF SORROW.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: JESUS WILL RETURN. IN THE MEANTIME, HE HAS GIVEN US EVERYTHING WE NEED TO WEATHER THE STORMS AND SUCCEED IN HIS KINGDOM MISSION.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: IT IS THROUGH JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION THAT WE RECEIVE HIS SPIRIT WHO IS OUR COMFORTER IN TIMES OF GREAT SORROW.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 What is the most difficult question you have been asked? How did you respond?
- 2 What is the most difficult question you have ever asked a parent, teacher, or mentor? How did they respond?
- 3 Does the Bible directly answer every question that comes into our minds? Why or why not?

The disciples, like us, did not always understand Jesus' teaching. In fact, sometimes it seemed to produce more questions than answers for them. In John 16, when His disciples expressed their lack of understanding, Jesus did not directly answer their question but instead addressed the sorrow at the heart of their uncertainty. While Scripture may not directly address every question that comes into our minds, it does address the questions behind our questions by giving us the answer to life's most pressing question: How can we have a personal relationship with God?

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Notes:

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 16:1-15.

- Why did Jesus want His disciples to know why He was leaving? How do you think they felt knowing their teacher and guide was leaving them?

Jesus wanted the disciples to be prepared for His departure. He knew His time was growing short, but the disciples did not understand Jesus would die or depart from them. They did not ask where Jesus was going because they were afraid. Jesus was talking about persecution that would come upon them; they were scared for the future and did not want to lose their teacher. Without a guide, the disciples would have been lost. They needed direction.

- How did Jesus give them hope amid their fear? Who is the Helper? What would He do?

Jesus sensed their fear and reassured them with the hope of a coming Helper, the Holy Spirit. The Helper would convict the world of sin and promote justice and righteousness.

- Why couldn't Jesus tell the disciples everything (v. 12)? What kept them from being ready to hear?
- How did Jesus describe the guidance of the Holy Spirit (vv. 13-15)? What is the Spirit's ultimate goal (v. 14)? How should knowing the Holy Spirit's goal shape our goals and purposes in life?

The disciples were already overwhelmed and fearful. Jesus knew they could not handle anymore at that time. That is why the Spirit would be their Guide, He would teach them and reveal to them God's purposes and plan. The Spirit's ultimate goal is to glorify Jesus. Consequently, our ultimate goal should be to glorify Christ in all that we do.

Notes:

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 16:16-24.

- What about Jesus' teaching did the disciples find confusing (vv. 5-8,16-18)?
- Put yourself in the disciples' shoes. Would Jesus' response in verse 20 have satisfied you? Why or why not?
- What do we learn about Jesus from his response (vv. 19-22)? What does Jesus' response tell us about His mission?

Jesus' disciples were so perplexed about the prospect of Jesus leaving them that they could not understand His' teaching on the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus not only knew their question before they articulated it but had previously told them that they would not be able to bear certain aspects of His teaching. While we might prefer that Jesus answer their question more directly, Jesus' response addresses the disciples' deeper concern—their fear of being separated from their Master. Jesus assured them that though His death would cause them deep sorrow, their sorrow would turn to joy. Sin separates us from God but by dying on the cross for our sins, Jesus provides the ultimate answer to our deepest sorrow. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus invites us into a relationship of eternal joy with the God who created us.

- What circumstances are currently producing sorrow in you, your family, or your friends? How might Jesus' words in verses 21-22 give you hope in the midst of these circumstances?
- How might knowing we will one day see Jesus and experience joy that cannot be taken away from us change our perspective on the difficulties we are presently facing?
- Why had the disciples not yet asked for anything in Jesus' name (vv. 23-24)?
- What did Jesus tell them would happen as they asked God in prayer? How does asking God in prayer fulfill our joy?

Notes:

Jesus had been teaching His disciples about the new order that will be established in the advent of His resurrection. When Jesus left to go to the Father, the disciples would be able to ask for all things in His name. If they asked according to His Will and for His glory, they would receive. When we ask Jesus for things out of a desire to glorify Him, our joy is fulfilled because we are able to see God's work in our lives. God wants to answer our prayers.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 16:25-33.

Along with the joy Jesus promised would come an indescribable access to the Father through the finished work of Christ on the cross. The Father will answer prayer requests that magnify Jesus and fit into His redemptive purposes—prayer that is in His name.

- How does it affect your prayer life to know you have immediate access to the Father in prayer? How does speaking to God in prayer bring us full joy?

Notes:

Following the resurrection, ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Jesus told us He is at the right hand of God, interceding for believers. The Holy Spirit would be indwelling all believers, interceding for them to the Father. Believers have direct access to the Father as they pray in Jesus' name.

- Why do you think prayer is so important to us as believers?

The privilege of prayer is one indicator of the Father's love for His children. Jesus said God loved the disciples because they had loved Jesus and believed Jesus came from God. Their family relationship with God as Father came through their personal faith relationship with Jesus. Prayer serves as a conduit to God for our physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Prayer also serves us well in our mission to connect others to Christ.

- What did Jesus predict would happen when the disciples witnessed His arrest and crucifixion (v. 31)?
- How does that relate to Christians today?

These disciples had lived most of the past three years in self-confidence. Several times, their confidence was displayed verbally, particularly in the pronouncements of Peter. But more difficult days were ahead. At the cross, they would leave their Master and after the cross, they would be scattered. But after that traumatic little while, their fear would turn to peace because they would learn how to trust the Father. In the same way, Christians today can have confidence in Christ

regardless of how poorly we are treated. Indeed, our joy is still full regardless of circumstances as we look with expectation for Jesus' return.

- Jesus nearly completed His teaching in the upper room. With what hope did He leave His followers in verse 33?

Notes:

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- What difference does trusting in God's love for you make as you try to persevere through difficult times?
- How can you rely on the Holy Spirit this week to help you endure "the little whiles" of pain, before you experience His peace?
- What steps can you take to be more aware of all that Christ has done (and is doing) for you in working all things for your good? How can we encourage each other in this area?

PRAY

Thank God for sending the Holy Spirit so that we can have a guide and an advocate to help us live lives that glorify God. Pray that God would help people in your group and people at our church to trust Christ alone to satisfy them.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - What is one circumstance in your life in which you are longing for Jesus to overcome?

 - What would it look like for you to claim the truth of John 16:33 as you confront that situation with trust and hope in Him?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize John 16:33.

- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: John 17:1-26.

JOHN 16:1-33

16:1. These things refers to Jesus's warning about persecution in 15:18–27. Stumbling refers to apostasy.

Notes:

16:2. The phrase a time is coming is reminiscent of prophetic or apocalyptic expressions such as “the days are coming” (Jr 7:32; 9:25; 16:14; 31:31, 38; Am 9:13; cp. Zch 14:1). On expulsion from the synagogue, see note at Jn 9:34. When anyone who kills you will think he is offering service to God most likely refers to Jewish rather than Roman persecution. Some rabbis believed that killing heretics was an act of divine worship. Note Paul's comments in Ac 26:9–11 and Php 3:6.

16:3–4. Though the persecutors think they are serving God, they do not know God.

16:5–6. Jesus's disciples were so self-absorbed that they could not think of the positive implications of his departure.

16:7. Reference to the Counselor harks back to the anticipated coming of the Spirit and the inauguration of the age of the kingdom in OT prophetic literature (Is 11:1–10; 32:14–18; 42:1–4; 44:1–5; Jr 31:31–34; Ezk 11:17–20; 36:24–27; 37:1–14; Jl 2:28–32).

16:8–11. The Holy Spirit will judge the world's sin of unbelief on the basis of his righteousness.

16:12–13. The Spirit's ministry of guiding Jesus's followers into all the truth will fulfill the psalmists' longing for divine guidance (Ps 25:4–5; 43:3; 86:11; 143:10). Isaiah recounted how God led his people in the wilderness by the Holy Spirit (Is 63:14) and predicted God's renewed guidance in the future (Is 43:19). The word declare (Gk *anangello*) occurs more than forty times in the book of Isaiah, where declaring things to come is said to be the exclusive domain of God (Is 48:14) and where God challenges pretenders to declare the things to come (Is 42:9; 44:7; 46:10; cp. Is 41:21–29, esp. vv. 22–23; 45:19).

16:14–15. The Spirit would glorify Jesus by declaring all his words and actions.

16:16–19. A little while harks back to previous instances of this expression in John’s Gospel (7:33; 12:35; 13:33; 14:19). Similar terms were used by OT prophets for announcing God’s judgment (Is 10:25; Jr 51:33; Hs 1:4; Hg 2:6) and salvation (Is 29:17). In this situation the reference is to the brief period between Jesus’s crucifixion and resurrection.

Notes:

16:20. Jesus’s prediction that his disciples’ sorrow will turn to joy echoes the experiences of God’s people in OT times (Est 9:22) and marks the fulfillment of OT prophecies (Is 61:2–3; Jr 31:13).

16:21. Jesus’s illustration of a woman in childbirth resonates with human experience. While the labor preceding birth is intense, all anguish is forgotten the moment the new child is born. Jesus elsewhere spoke of the end times as “the beginning of labor pains” and times of “great distress” (Mt 24:8, 21, 29).

16:22–24. In that day here refers to the time of Jesus’s resurrection.

16:25–27. These things in v. 25 refers to the entire farewell discourse. A time is coming occurs also in 16:2, 32.

16:28. The depiction of Jesus as having come from the Father ... into the world and as leaving the world and going to the Father is patterned after the portrayal of the Word of God which is sent, accomplishes its purpose, and returns to the one who sent it (Is 55:11–12).

16:29–31. Despite their confident confession, the disciples are no closer to understanding than before. Jesus’s question (Do you now believe?) expresses skepticism and mild rebuke.

16:32. Jesus’s prediction of a coming hour at which his followers will be scattered (cp. 19:27) may allude to Zch 13:7 (quoted in Mt 26:31; cp. Mt 26:56; 1Kg 22:17). The sheep would desert the Shepherd and return home, and yet Jesus would not be alone due to the constant presence of his Father.

16:33. Jesus’s farewell discourse ends on a note of triumph (1Jn 2:13–14; 4:4; 5:4–5).

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of John</i>
	AUGUST 29	21

THE PRAYERS OF JESUS

JOHN 17:1-26

AUGUST 29, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying John 17:1-26. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: CONNECTING AND SERVING STARTS WITH PRAYER FOR ONE ANOTHER.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: IN JOHN 17, WE HAVE THE LONGEST RECORDED PRAYER OF JESUS, AND IN THESE VERSES WE LEARN HOW TO PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: THE UNITY JESUS PRAYED FOR IS MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 In the following situations, would you rather there be a large crowd in attendance, a small group of people, or be alone: sporting event, concert, birthday party, doctor's appointment, shopping, vacation, elevator ride, or worship?
- 2 What does this reveal about the types of experiences we like to share with others?
- 3 How do shared experiences strengthen the bonds of love and friendship?

The church exists to connect to God and multiply disciples as we serve our community and connect others to Him. Faith in Jesus is a shared experience we were never meant to live alone. We are designed to connect with others in the body of the church. Through Jesus, God has redeemed a people for Himself and for His purpose. Today, we are going to talk about how to pray for one another with the goal of strengthening our relationships with each other and with Jesus.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Notes:

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 17:1-5.

John 17 records Jesus' final prayer before being betrayed and arrested. This prayer is known as Jesus' high priestly prayer, because it leads up to His once-and-for-all sacrifice for our sins on the cross. This prayer reveals Jesus' own heart in prayer.

- What "hour" had come for Jesus? What does that tell us about the importance of Jesus' prayer in these verses?
- What did Jesus say is the key to eternal life (v. 3)? How does our common experience of redemption unify us as believers? How are our relationships with one another rooted in Jesus' relationship with the Father?
- What was Jesus' purpose in being glorified on earth (v. 4)? How might God glorify us in our own relationships for the sole purpose of glorifying Him?

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 17:6-14.

- What all did Jesus say He had done for us in these verses? What did Jesus pray for us?
- Read Hebrews 7:25. How does it make you feel that Jesus always prays for you? What kind of unity does Jesus want to see in His body of believers?

- How does the world regard us because of our relationship with Jesus (v. 14)? Have you ever experienced this personally?

Notes:

These verses contain a huge number of third person pronouns (them, they) and each of these instances refer to Jesus' disciples. Jesus cared for His disciples so much that in His last act as a free man, He prayed for them. Jesus prays for us still today (see Heb. 7:25), and the Father answers His prayers. While Jesus is not here physically, He is still with us through His Spirit, which unifies us in the bonds of peace. (See Eph. 4:3.)

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 17:15-19.

- Jesus could have asked God to remove His followers from the sinful world we live in, but He did not. Why do you think that is?
- How does the fact that we remain in the world affect our connection to Christian community? How does it impact our connection to those not a part of Christian community?
- Jesus also asked that we be protected from the evil one. What are some ways the evil one might target our connection to one another in the church? Have you experienced anything personally?

In verses 15-16, "world" by context refers to those opposed to God's rule. Though we have been redeemed, we still live in the world. A world that sometimes is hostile toward us. For this reason, we must remain together. Though God is always with us and will never leave us, God has given us a support system in the church that He desires for us to take hold of. We do not face the world as individual Christians, but as a unified church.

- Jesus specifically addresses our being sent together in verse 18. What does it mean that we were sent into the world in the same way Jesus was sent?

Notes:

- What role does accountability through community play in Christian mission?

None of us can serve God effectively by human strength and ingenuity. We must depend on God to work in us to accomplish these goals. We also must depend on the wisdom and accountability of others to help us grow. God never designed or desired for us to grow apart from the fellowship and community we find in the church. Jesus wanted us to be united in the gospel and united on mission. When we connect to one another in unity, we honor the one who saved us.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 17:20-26.

- Up until this point, Jesus had been praying for His current disciples. Who was Jesus praying for in these verses?
- Upon what is our unity as brothers and sisters in Christ based? What value does that place on being unified?

Jesus shifted His prayer to those who would believe through the witness of the early disciples, meaning all Christians in the future—including the present and future church. The unity we have in the church is based on the unity in God's own person. We are God's image bearers; when we live in unity, we point others to our unity in Him.

- How did Jesus make God's name known? How do we make His name known through the community of the church?

Notes:

- What impression does a loving and unified community of faith give to the world?

We model Christ's love in the world through our love for one another (v. 26). Unity is not an insignificant or marginal issue in the Christian life. The community of the church should be one of deep connection. Jesus prayed that we would be unified in His love, and when that happens, the church becomes attractive because the type of love that exists within the church cannot be found outside of the church.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Notes:

- In what ways is our connection to fellow Christians deeper than our connection to others who do not believe in Jesus, including non-believing family members?
- When has your relationship with other believers helped you deal with the struggles of living in a fallen world?
- What significant prayer needs exist within this group? What do we have to praise God for? How can we hold each other accountable to pray for one another and praise God for His work in our lives?
- How can you personally contribute to our unity as a group and as a church?

PRAY

Praise God for the gift of the church. Ask that our unity with one another would reflect the unity of the Trinity. Thank Jesus for loving us enough to pray for us and our unity. Pray that your unity would be a demonstration of the grace of God to the lost world.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - What are you praying for the people in your group this week?
 - What do you want our group to be praying on your behalf?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize John 17:11.

- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: John 18:1-27.

JOHN 17:1-26

17:1-26. In His final prayer in this chapter, Jesus gave an account of His earthly mission to the Father who sent Him. He prayed first for Himself (vv. 1-5), then for His disciples (vv. 6-19), and finally for all future believers (vv. 20-26). In His prayer, Jesus adopted the stance of one who has completed His mission (v. 4, cp. 4:34), having been sent by the Father and now preparing to return (13:1; 16:28). His prayer was fulfilled when He cried out from the cross, saying of the mission of redemption and revelation He had come to accomplish: "It is finished" (19:30).

Notes:

17:1-5. The first unit in Jesus' prayer is His intercession for Himself.

17:1. Jesus looked up to heaven, striking a customary posture in prayer (Ps 123:1; Mk 7:34; Lk 18:13). The opening petition, Glorify Your Son so that the Son may glorify You, is a claim to deity since the OT affirms that God will not give His glory to another (Isa 42:8; 48:11).

17:2. God's granting of authority to Jesus (5:27) marks the beginning of a new era (Isa 9:6-7; Dan 7:13-14; see Mt 11:27; 28:18).

17:2-3. Eternal life comes from knowing God and Jesus the sent Son (1:4; 5:26; 20:31). Knowing God is not confined to intellectual knowledge; it involves living in fellowship with Him. That God is the only true God is affirmed in the Shema (Dt 6:4; cp. Jn 5:44; 1Jn 5:20). Jesus, in turn, is the One and Only sent by the Father (Jn 1:14,18; 3:16,18) and the only way to Him (14:6). The full name Jesus Christ is found only here and in 1:17, forming a literary inclusion. Note that in these verses Jesus referred to Himself in the third person.

17:4. The reference to Jesus' work in the singular harks back to 4:34, another inclusion.

17:5. Again, Jesus claimed preexistence (v. 24; 1:1, 14; 3:13; 6:62; 8:58; 16:28).

17:6-19. The second unit of Jesus' prayer contains His intercession for His disciples, beginning with a rehearsal of His ministry to them (vv. 6-8). Jesus' prayer for His followers in verses 9-19 includes petitions for their protection (vv. 11-16) and for their consecration for service in the truth (vv. 17-19).

Notes:

17:6-7. The disciples heard about God and his plan from the Son. Most sons probably reflect their fathers, perhaps in facial features, height, hair color, personality, and sometimes even world view. Jesus specifically identified his task in the world as one of revelation to a select group of people chosen by the Father. God took human form to communicate with the world. The first act of the Son in drawing disciples unto himself in the vibrant relationship of new life was to tell them and show them what the Father is like. Believers are gifts from the Father to the Son. All people belong to the Father by creation, but those who trust in the Son and relate to him by faith become God's children by redemption.

17:8. Jesus spoke only what his Father had told him. He can describe his own teaching ministry by saying, "I gave them the words you gave me." In this verse the Lord also talked about edification. When Paul stayed three years with the Ephesians declaring God's truth, he followed the example of Jesus who did the same thing with these disciples (Acts 20:17-21).

17:9-10. The Lord also spoke of intercession. Verse 9 contains the curious phrase, "I am not praying for the world." We should not infer here that the Lord never prayed for the world. This particular prayer focuses on those believers you have given me and emphasizes again the reality of the Bible's teaching on election. The switch to the present tense is an important notification of the Lord's on-going ministry. One paraphrase of this verse says, "And all of them, since they are mine, belong to you; and you have given them back to me with everything else of yours, and so they are my glory!" What a stunning reality! Faltering, failing, sinning human beings represent the glory of the holy Son of God!

17:11. Jesus brought before the Father the fact that his people would be staying in the world after he left. The word world occurs eighteen times in this prayer. This is a strong testimony to the importance of the context of our lives and ministry. The address Holy Father is unique here in the New Testament.

Notes:

17:15-17. How is it possible to be “in the world” and yet not of the world? These verses answer that question. Whatever the biblical doctrine of separation might mean, it certainly does not mean isolation. Jesus prayed not for removal from the world but for an awareness of its evils so they could be avoided. The danger is not the general presence of evil but the evil one. The New Testament indicates that the world is in the ultimate control of the prince of the power of the air who does battle against the living God by affecting the lives of his people. The antidote is sanctification.

17:18-19. From the very first days of Christianity, true believers have practiced separation by infiltration. The Father sent the Son into the world and now the Son was sending the believers into the world. Here the Lord introduced the word sanctify in different verb forms. In effect, he said, “Lead these disciples to an act of dedication as I have dedicated myself to your work. Then as they live their lives for you, Father, they will ultimately enjoy the fixed and final dedication you bestow upon them.”

17:20-21. If we had any doubt that this prayer applies to believers today, it is erased by verse 20. The heart of this final paragraph of the chapter focuses on unity—the ultimate demonstration of God’s work through his people in the world. We learn here that body unity is patterned after divine unity. The absolute oneness of the Father and the Son will now be spiritually transferred to believers for a specific purpose—spiritual unity. The union of the church is not patterned after some earthly organization or any well-meaning intentions of humanity. God joins our spirits through the Holy Spirit because Jesus’ blood is “thicker than water” and thicker than human bonds.

17:22. Christian unity is facilitated by glory, first given to Christ and then in turn to the disciples. Glory (doxa) in this context is not an absolute attribute of God but a relative possession that can be reassigned to believers. Some interpreters see heaven here, but there would be no point in such a futuristic view with respect to the mission statement of verse 23: “to let the world know that you sent me.” Peter wrote that the divine nature was already in us as a result of regeneration, so we already have a measure of the glory of Jesus himself.

Notes:

17:23. We also learn in this passage that body unity is a witness to the world. Like a set of matched mixing bowls, we are the smaller one that fits into Christ who fits into the Father. Mixing bowls may provide too mundane a metaphor here, but Jesus’ teaching about the vine and the branches in chapter 15 is affirmed by this prayer of chapter 17. The unity of believers calls forth a recognition of God’s hand by observers in the world even while the church is on earth. Just a few hours before this prayer, Jesus told the disciples, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (13:35).

17:24. Furthermore, body unity will be complete only in heaven. If the disciples listened to this prayer, they may have remembered Jesus’ teaching from chapter 14 as he promised them they would eventually arrive at the place where he was going. He wanted them to see him there. They had seen him scorned and hated on earth. Soon they would see him killed and buried. But they had never seen the splendor of heaven and his role as the Son of the Father.

We see just a touch of humanity in this verse. Just as we invite our friends home to show them how hard we have worked to make it attractive and comfortable, so Jesus looked forward to the time when all his people would be in his Father’s house. What a reminder that our Lord was always a pilgrim and stranger on earth. Now he prayed for guests to visit his eternal home. Notice also that heaven is heaven because of the presence of the Savior, not because of any other physical or material accoutrements.

The glory of verse 24 seems different than what we saw in verse 22. Here believers observe it but do not partake in it personally, so we focus now on an attribute of deity. The glory and splendor that belong to Christ in heaven are a gift from his Father. This gift was motivated by love that the Father had before the foundation of the world. Before Adam, the Father loved the Son. This love will continue throughout all eternity so that believers may see its effects in the heavenly position afforded the Messiah.

Notes:

17:25-26. Again we find the contrast between the world and disciples we saw in verses 9, 14, 16. The words Righteous Father in reference to God appear only here in the New Testament. They appeal to the justice of God. The world will be excluded from final glory because it has rejected the only means of grace. But the disciples, and all believers, live life with a divine viewpoint because they have known the incarnate God.

The exegesis of the Father that occupied Christ's ministry is both complete and continuous. Complete in the sense that the incarnation demonstrated what God was like to those who would listen. Continuous in that it will go on as long as the world lasts. The impact of the latter part of the verse suggests that the very person of Christ lives in us. Through that inseparable union, we are recipients of divine love. The church of Jesus Christ dare not let the pagan society preempt its keynote theme of love. The love of God in the Son and consequently in the church marks Christians and enables them to reflect and communicate God's love.