

John 14:15-31 (ESV)

¹⁵ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

¹⁸ “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” ²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?” ²³ Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴ Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.

²⁵ “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

²⁸ You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. ³⁰ I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, ³¹ but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

The Spirit of Truth

The late Martin Niemöller was one of Hitler’s prized prisoners. The famous German minister vigorously resisted tyranny. He was imprisoned for seven-and-a-half years at a camp where 238,756 persons were put to death. Yet he carried on a daring ministry at Dachau. Pastor Niemöller was more than a former prisoner of war. He was a living testimony to truth. To talk with Niemöller was to visit a man who looked death in the face day after day and knew the power of the resurrected Christ. His remarkable life reassures us of the triumph of truth.

Truth. It’s not a word that is easily understood today. Our society tells us that there is no real truth, only opinions. Now we can sympathize with this notion to some extent. All the tyrants and empires and armies and philosophers who have claimed to know all the truth are dust now. And nothing is left of the certainty which used to be the foundation of Western civilization except political agendas. And from every side, from advertisements and internet blogs and entertainment and politicians, voices are screaming or whispering into our ears all the time. In this total babble of words that surround us, how can we know what is true?

I remember years ago when one of our most beloved pastors fell into deep depression. It was so

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severe he had to be hospitalized. He has since recovered, but I remember with pain those months of darkness. He once said he felt that God had abandoned him. I answered, "It's not your grip on God that will see you through, but His grip on you." "I sure hope that's true," he answered.

Even when his normal emotions had been devastated by disease, and he didn't feel the truth at all, the truth was still true. And God's truth carried Him through the valley of the shadow of death.

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I. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS DELIVERS GOD'S TRUTH TO US

Notice how everything Jesus says about the Holy Spirit in this passage is wrapped up with the truth of God's word. When the Holy Spirit comes you will "know that I am in the Father, and you in Me, and I in you." This is a statement which reveals truth. There are words from God which open up true reality to us.

How do we love God? By feeling ecstatic about Him? No, but by keeping His Word. How do we know His Word? We know His Word because the Holy Spirit will teach it to us.

Last week I gave you, unasked and probably unappreciated, my opinion about the greatest rock guitarist in the world. So today I want to enlighten you about the greatest rhythm-and-blues guitarist in the world, Jimmy Reed. We are told by an expert in this old music that if you listen carefully to Jimmy Reed's old vinyl records, there could sometimes be heard, ever so faintly in the background, a soft woman's voice murmuring in advance the next words of the song. The story that grew up around this -- and perhaps it is true -- was that Jimmy Reed was so absorbed in the bluesy beat and the throbbing guitar riffs of his music that he simply could not remember the words of his own songs. He needed help with the lyrics, and the woman's voice was none other than that of his wife, devotedly coaching her husband through the recording session by whispering the upcoming stanzas into his ear as he sang.

The primary task, then, of the Holy Spirit is reminding believers of the truth, jogging the memories of the followers of Jesus about all of his commandments so that they can keep them in love, whispering the lyrics of faithful obedience in their ears. It may surprise us to think of the Holy Spirit in this way, as a quiet, whispering teacher of the commandments of Jesus. Often the Spirit is advertised in flashier terms: The Spirit gives ecstasy; the Spirit evokes speaking in unknown tongues; the Spirit prompts dramatic and miraculous healings. Indeed, the Holy Spirit of God does perform such deeds, but these are all derivative of the one, primary activity of the Spirit -- reminding the children of God about everything that Jesus taught and commanded (John 14:26), whispering the gospel lyrics into the ears of the forgetful faithful.

The reason we need the Holy Spirit murmuring the gospel in our ears, of course, is that we are notoriously forgetful. As one commentator has pointed out, "an early Christian definition for being lost ... was 'to have amnesia.'" We are amnesiacs who cannot keep God's promises clearly in mind. Like the great Jimmy Reed, we are caught up in the rhythms of life, but we forget the lyrics of the Gospel.

II. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S WISDOM IN US

A pilot, a business executive, a pastor and a Boy Scout were flying together on a small private plane when they suddenly experienced engine trouble. Within a matter of minutes the pilot said, "This plane

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is going down. Furthermore, I have noticed we have only three parachutes on board. I have a wife and children at home. They are expecting me for dinner." With that the pilot took a parachute and jumped. Immediately the business executive spoke up and said, "Some people think I am the smartest person on earth. If I should perish in this plane, it would be a great loss, not just to my company, but to the world." With that, he grabbed for a parachute and jumped. That's when that pastor turned to the Boy Scout and said, "Son, you are young and I am old. You have your life ahead of you. I've finished mine. Take the remaining parachute and jump." But the Boy Scout said, "Relax Reverend. The smartest man in all the world just jumped out the plane with my backpack."

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Do you want to live wisely? You have the greatest teacher inside you, dear ones. The Holy Spirit is not like a magic genie, though. The Holy Spirit doesn't grant wishes or give you magic formulas. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to teach you how to glorify Jesus Christ. Wisdom is more than facts, figures, and formulas. Wisdom is discernment. Wisdom is practical truth, the right truth for the right reason at the right time. What is the wise thing to do in a given situation? To find out, ask, "What will bring glory to Jesus?" The Holy Spirit will give you real wisdom, wisdom that matters for eternity.

The Holy Spirit does not give "worldly wisdom," dear ones. The Holy Spirit does not help you fulfill all your carnal desires and ambitions. You can't "use" the Holy Spirit to help you get rich or make you popular or anything else that will feed your sinful pride. The Holy Spirit has been given to teach us the things of Christ which make us conform more and more to His image.

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER IN US

A little boy was on a camping trip with his dad. At dusk they found a place to camp for the night. As they prepared the camp site, the little boy tried to push a rock closer to the fire, but the rock was too heavy. "Use all your resources," said the dad as the kid complained about his struggle. "I am using all my resources!" replied the little boy, with tears in his eyes. "You haven't asked me to help," said the dad, as he reached down for the rock.

You know, it's hard to understand why Americans are so out of shape. We continually rack our brains, wrestle with problems, search for solutions, jump to conclusions, and try to sort things out. Certain groups of us are always bending the rules, skating on thin ice, breaking promises, climbing the corporate ladder, rocking the boat, and flying off the handle. Some people work hard splitting hairs, stirring up trouble, running amuck, digging up dirt, twisting things around, pushing their luck, slinging mud, carrying things too far, spreading rumors, poking fun. Other people like to throw their weight around, dodge responsibility, shoot the breeze, pass the buck, beat around the bush, punch the clock, wipe the slate clean, paint the town, capture the moment. In fact, we will do almost anything but ask the Holy Spirit for help.

As you push against the heavy loads of life, have you asked the Helper to assist you? As you make difficult decisions, have you asked the Helper to counsel you? But I also have to ask you this: Are you ready to receive His wisdom? The wisdom the Holy Spirit gives you will be from God's Word for God's glory. That's the only wisdom He has to offer, because that wisdom is based not on feelings or impulses, but truth—the eternal truth of God's Word.