

Life Group Discussion Guide

No Greater Love – Part 2: Remaining in Jesus

Week 4: The Spirit's Help in Persecution • John 16:1-11

At the beginning of each year, the President of the United States delivers an oration to the U.S. Congress presenting key items that should be considered necessary and expedient to act on in the year ahead. You know it as “The State of the Union.”

This week, as we continue our series through the Gospel of John, we come to a passage that carries even more authority and urgency than the presidential declarations of our day. As Jesus seeks to prepare His disciples for the time when He'll no longer be with them (in the flesh), He provides clear direction for where God's Kingdom is headed, and how they—and we—can be readied for the events to come.

As we unpack this passage, Pastor Brent presented three key truths Jesus spoke to His disciples then that are critical for us to know now:

1. The World will Persecute Jesus and His Followers

“All this I have told you so that you will not fall away. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when their time comes you will remember that I warned you about them.” John 16:1-4

Jesus begins His address by explaining why the things He's about to say are important: “So that you will not fall away.” This idea must certainly have come as a surprise. These men have been with Jesus since the beginning, they have given up their livelihoods to follow Him, and consider themselves fully committed to Him. What could make them turn back now? The answer can be summed up in one word: *them*.

The “them” Jesus speaks of are those who've devoted themselves to persecuting Jesus during His earthly ministry. It's the same people who will ultimately crucify Him, and who will then unleash their persecution against His followers. The difficult reality of these statements is that these first disciples were not the only ones to be persecuted because of Jesus. This persecution continues to this day, taking on many different forms throughout the world.

- Jesus was clear in His warning that those to follow Him would experience persecution. Do you live with this same expectation, or are you surprised when a person or institution pushes back against your faith? How does this week's passage challenge your view of persecution?
- Have you personally experienced persecution for following Jesus? How have you responded? Talk about it.

- Take time now to intercede in prayer for the millions of Christians who are experiencing persecution here and around the world. As you do, consider this quote from the message: *“Many people believe that we are to pray for the end of persecution. This is not often how the persecuted church would have us to pray, because Jesus uses this persecution to truly reveal Himself in many of these dark places. Rather, we pray that the Christians who are being persecuted would have backs strong enough to endure and to share the message of hope.”*

2. Jesus is Leaving for our Benefit

“I did not tell you this from the beginning because I was with you, but now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.” John 16:4–7

When Jesus tells His disciples He will be leaving them, they’re filled with grief. But then He says something even more shocking: “It is for your good that I am going away.” The disciples struggle to understand this because their minds are set on their own desires, instead of the sovereign purposes of God. Their plans leave no room for a suffering, servant king who will lay down His own life.

- Have you ever been guilty of putting your own plans and desires above God’s? Talk about it.
- How does this insight into the disciples’ short-sighted perspective challenge your own?

The truth is, despite the disciples’ fear, Jesus has no plans to leave them as orphans. Instead, He promises to send them One who is called the “Paracletos” in Greek, which is often translated as Helper, Advocate, or Intercessor. This Advocate is no less than the very Spirit of God who will dwell inside the believers of Jesus.

“In the letter to the Ephesians, we learn how the Spirit of God seals us, which shows us that we not only belong to God, but have the power of God living inside of us! Indeed, the Holy Spirit, which signals the departure of Jesus, fulfills the very promise and guarantee of His presence in the lives of His followers.”

- Jesus Himself said it is better for Him to go away so the Holy Spirit could come. How have you personally experienced this reality in your own relationship with the Holy Spirit? In what ways would you like to grow deeper in your awareness of and intimacy with the Spirit of God?
- Take time now to praise the Father and Son for sending the Spirit, and to worship the Spirit of God for the gift He is to you as a follower of Jesus.

3. We are Not Alone in the Battle!

“When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.” John 16:8-11

In this passage we see that the Spirit of God comes not only to help and advocate for believers, but to convict the world—those who do not follow Jesus—of three things:

- a. **Sin**—The sin referred to here is the rejection of Jesus as Savior and rightful heir to the throne of God. The Holy Spirit, who was an eyewitness to Jesus’ death and resurrection, testifies to the world’s guilt in condemning Him.
- b. **Righteousness**—Jesus’ ascension to the right hand of the Father proves that He was declared by God to be a righteous sacrifice for sin. As a result, the world is judged by the Spirit of God because it does not acknowledge Jesus as the righteous Savior of the world.
- c. **Judgment**—Through Jesus’ death and resurrection, the prince of this world was dethroned and the true King took His rightful place. Jesus has already claimed the victory! As such, we can know with confidence that the evils done against followers of Jesus will ultimately be brought to justice, and those who have done them will stand judged alongside their false king. Jesus reigns supreme and we will join Him in His kingdom forever.

We are not alone in our battle against the world, but equipped and empowered by the One who has already overcome it!

- How does it embolden you to consider that Jesus has already defeated Satan, and that all evil done against you will come under His righteous judgment? What does this set you free from, or for?
- Empowered by God’s Spirit, how will you live boldly for the Gospel in a world that rejects it? Be practical and specific.