**THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH**

John 16:5–15

Key Verse: 16:13a

“’But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.’”

Somebody this week asked me what it was like to be eighteen years old, and I was like “Wait, I’m not eighteen?” That was almost seven years ago now. And I was thinking about it, I remember my freshman year of college, I was super ready for school, I got all my book and folders and was wearing my new outfit from the Gap and went to my first class, Introduction to Philosophy. I remember a bunch of dreamy-eyed freshman in an un-air-conditioned room. The professor was late, and was a young guy who looked like he had just walked through a tornado. He came into the room, went behind his desk, grabbed his chair, brought it to the front of the class, put it down on top of his desk, and asked, “Does this chair exist?” We all waited for a second; waiting for it to be a joke, but after a while could tell he was being serious. Then we’re all like, “Uh, duh...” But then he asked, “How do you *know* this chair exists? Because you can see it? Because you can feel it? Because you can sit on it? Does that make something exist? What about an idea? You can’t see an idea, you can’t smell or taste it or sit on it, it exists only in your mind. Does that mean all ideas don’t really exist?” I could tell everyone in the class had just had their minds blown. Then he asked us, “How can we *know* the truth?”

How can we know something is true? How can we know the truth of who God is? How can we know the truth about what God is doing? How can we know the truth of our lives?

This summer, we’ve been doing a study on the Holy Spirit. We’ve looked at how the Holy Spirit (1) gives us new birth, (2) satisfies our souls, (3) is our Encourager. Today, we’re going to be thinking about how the Holy Spirit helps us know the truth. We’ll be thinking about the Holy Spirit as **The Guide**, **The Relayer**, and **The Foreteller of Truth**.

**1. The Spirit: The Guide (1-13a)**

Before we get into this, let’s first think about the context of this passage. Our passage comes from a portion of the Bible called, “The Upper Room Dialogues.” It captures Jesus’ last moments alone with his disciples before his death, a time where he and his disciples partake in the Passover Seder, and is only found in the Gospel of John.

Now, Jesus had just finished telling his disciples a lot of beautiful things, but also a lot of heavy things. He had told them that he would be leaving them (14:1-4,28), that they would be hated by the world (15:20a), be persecuted (15:20b) excommunicated from the synagogue (16:2a) and that they would be killed (16:2b). Pretty heavy stuff. Then we come to today’s passage. Jesus tells his disciples in verse 5, “Now I am going to him who sent me.” I imagine that there was a moment of silence after Jesus said this; Jesus waiting for a reaction from his disciples, but just got blank stares. Because look at the second part of verse 5 and also verse 6. “None of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things.’” The disciples had just been basically told by Jesus that he would leave them, that they were going to have a really rough time, and eventually, they would be killed. They were going to be facing some rough times, and what’s more, they would have to face them without Jesus.

In the first chapter of John, the author describes the world without God as a world in “darkness” (1:5). John the Baptist describes the world without God as an uncharted “wildness” (1:23). Jesus himself describes the world without God as one that hates God “without reason” (15:25). After Jesus would leave his disciples, they would be left to a world like this—a world of darkness, a wilderness, a world that hates God without reason.

And that’s the world we live in, especially when it comes to finding the truth about God. There are a lot of things that we don’t really understand. We seem to have more questions about God than we do answers. It’s hard to trust religion, to even trust the way we think, with our own baggage and wounds from life, what’s more our underlying selfishness we bring to everything we think about. How can we know the truth of God in a dark, uncharted and hostile world?

Let’s look at verse 7. “’But very truly I tell you, it is for your own 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.’” Now, Jesus had talked to his disciples already about the Advocate, or “Encourager,” and we know from last week that this is the Holy Spirit; which is a great promise. Jesus isn’t just leaving his disciples alone, he is promising the Holy Spirit, which we’ve learned, is the Spirit or presence of God himself with us. If you look at verse 8, the Holy Spirit will come and even “prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment.” The Holy Spirit would show how wrong the world actually is about the truths of God and us. (9-11).

But let’s think about what Jesus is saying here to his disciples. If you look at verse 7, he’s saying that his leaving is for the disciples’ “own good” and that it’s *better* that he’s leaving them, that the Holy Spirit would somehow be a better trade-off than having Jesus there with them.

Now, I don’t know about you, but I’ve always envied the disciples. They actually got to hang out with Jesus—God himself as a man. Think about it, they got to listen to, get to know, learn, relax, spend time with God himself. I wish I could do that. There are so many times where I’ve wished that Jesus were here, that I could listen to what he had to say, ask him some questions about God and about what I’m supposed to do with my life. I wish that I could get a straight, audible answer from God about the truth.

I think Jesus is speaking to us too in this passage when he says, “it’s for your own good.” It’s actually *better* for us to have the Holy Spirit. Why?

Let’s read verses 12 and 13a together. “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.” Jesus here calls the Holy Spirit, the “spirit of truth.” This spirit of truth he says will “guide you into all the truth.”

If you’ve ever been to a place you’ve never known—on a hiking trip or something like that—you usually have a guide. The guide is an expert of the terrain, knows where to go and where not to go. Jesus promises his disciples, and us, that God himself, the Holy Spirit, will be our guide into all the truth. He will guide us through everything that is confusing, that doesn’t make sense. He will guide us through the misinterpretations of the world, the uncertainty of ourselves. And Jesus doesn’t promise his disciples that they’ll “know” the truth, but that he will guide them into all the truth.

**Jesus here shows us that when it comes to the truth, God isn’t so much about giving us immediate answers, but is more about guiding us on the journey to truth.**

Let’s look at 13a again. How can we be guided into all the truth? To be guided by someone through a place you don’t know requires full trust in your guide. If you don’t trust your guide, think of maybe a better way to get there, then you’ll eventually get lost. Likewise, to be guided by the Holy Spirit into all truth, you have to completely trust him. A wise king once said, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight” (Pr3:5-6).

So, when it comes to knowing the truth of God, the truth of ourselves and the truth of the world, we must trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. **We can never know the truth with our own reason.** If we don’t trust God in this way, then we are left to discovering truth in the darkness by ourselves. But if we do, Jesus promises that we will be lead into all the truth. We’re completely trusting in the Holy Spirit as our guide, then we can be assured that we’re headed in the right direction, God’s direction. Like the disciples, Jesus is saying to us that it’s actually better this way, that the Holy Spirit can guide us in a very personal, spiritual, and intellectual way to come to know who God is and who we are in a way that maybe Jesus wasn’t meant to. It’s really the task of the Holy Spirit, to lead us into the truth of God, to make God known.

But how does that happen? At first, it sounds a bit intangible. How can we allow the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth?

**2. The Spirit: The Relayer (13b)**

Let’s think about God for a second. God. The creator of everything. The being that isn’t limited by physical reality, exists outside of time and space, God who never began and who will never end. God. Now let’s try to imagine, if God had something we know of as a mind, how does God think? Does God think like us? Does God think in words? Does God think at all, is there a process for God, or does he just know? Now compare God with us. How do we understand things? How do we think? How do we understand? It seems we understand truth in broken pieces. We need metaphors, we need things to be compared to things we already know, and yet still we won’t fully understand it all. Not to mention, God himself, the truth of ourselves, how can that truth be communicated to us? How can we even begin to fathom the truth of God? It would be like a brain surgeon trying to explain brain surgery to a baby.

The Olympics began this past Friday, and before the big opening ceremony , the tradition is that the flame from the previous location for the Olympics is sent to the next location through a series of relay runners. From Beijing to London this year, it took 70 days and 8,000 relay runners to relay the flame. This whole idea of passing on a flame came from the Greek myth of Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods and brought it down to mortals.

The Holy Spirit is like our relay runner from God to us. Let’s look at verse 13b. “He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears,” The Holy Spirit relays to us what God is saying, doesn’t make things up on his own or alter anything, but is true to only what God is saying. He relays it to us in a way we can understand. Let’s look also at verses 14 and 15. This relay happens because of Jesus, who has been given all things by God. And Jesus said the Holy Spirit will receive from him what he received from the Father.

Now, Jesus is speaking here to his disciples who would all go out into the world and share the truth of the Gospel to different kinds of people. Some of the disciples would go on to write a lot of the New Testament, including the author John. These words of the Bible, we consider inspired by God. It is the unchanged truths of God, of people inspired by the Holy Spirit and written down for us. So the Holy Spirit has relayed to us the truths of God and ourselves and given us the Bible. We’ve been reading the Bible as a ministry in 90 days. A lot of times, while I’ve been reading some parts of the Bible, I’ve been like, “Wait, who wrote this? Or, is this okay, this guy Solomon had like thousands of wives. Where the heck is Song of Songs coming from?” But the more I’ve been reading, the more I’ve been realizing something:

**The words on the pages of the Bible themselves aren’t the words of God. God speaks to us through the Bible only as we read them. And as we read the Bible, depending on God as our guide, the Holy Spirit works to relay what God is saying to us.**

The relay began when these authors of Scripture were inspired by God, and the Holy spirit again relays God’s truth to us from Scripture to us. According to Jesus, if we’re relying on the guidance of the spirit, we’re getting exactly what God is saying. So, God didn’t speak from who he is to the Bible, but he *speaks* through the Bible to us. The words are alive. We can actually listen to God’s active voice to us through the Bible. We have access to the truth of who God is and who we are. God is so humble that he gives us such truth in a way we can digest and understand. The author of Hebrews writes, “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Heb4:12). This aliveness of God speaking to us happens through the relaying of the Holy Spirit.

So think again about who God is and who we are. God is communicating to us. He is speaking to us through his words. We can come to know what God is like through his words, understand him,through the Holy Spirit. The more we become familiar with God’s word and relying on the Holy Spirit, the more we can hear what God is saying to us beyond even God’s words. We can hear God’s words of comfort, God’s words of guidance, God’s words of repentance. The closer we get, the more we can grow closer to the truth of what God is saying to us.

So the Holy Spirit works as our guide to truth, and also is our relayer of truth. Now we come to the third aspect to the Holy Spirit as the spirit of truth.

**3. The Spirit: The Foreteller (13b)**

Now for us, the future holds a lot of uncertainty. We plan out futures out, we get our degrees, our jobs, our families, and we make our choices accordingly. But a lot of things are uncertain. How do we make our choices? How to we move forward into uncertainty? Which way does God want me to go?

Now the disciples would soon face also a lot of tough choices about their futures. After Jesus would leave them, everything would be dangerous and uncertain. But Jesus promises them the spirit of truth “will tell you what is yet to come” (13b). Now, this would especially be true for the author John. The book of Revelation would be a prophetic book of what is to still to come. A lot of Chapter 16 also, Jesus speaks of his second coming. But I think that Jesus was also talking about “what is yet to come” as his disciples being guided into the very near future. The Holy Spirit, the foreteller, would show the disciples what he was going to do in their lives. We see in Acts how the Holy Spririt helped Peter and the apostles make decisions—who would be the new twelve disciples, about the church of Jerusalem, about circumcision—and how the Holy Spirit helped Paul make tough decisions of what to do and where to go during his missionary journeys. They all relied on the guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead their lives.

Now, I’m not suggesting that we all necessarily can have the gift of prophecy and forecast the future. I think it’s less dramatic than that. I do think that Jesus is showing us that the more we come to know and rely on the Spirit of truth in God’s word, the more we can begin to see what’s ahead of us, what God is doing and where he wants us to go. We grow closer to God and in knowing his ways. And it’s important to remember that it’s not us who can tell what is coming ahead, but it is God himself as the spirit of truth who already knows. So we can rely on him. This aspect of the spirit of truth, as the forecaster, shows us the importance of prayer. When facing tough choices, we have to pray, we have to ask God to show us which way to go. And Jesus promises that he will show us. He will guide us.

Finding the truth of our lives is more than just the little truths, like what class should I take, or what should my major be, who should I marry, where should I go. **Finding the truth for our lives begins with wanting to follow where God is going rather than where we want to.**

When reading the Psalms these past two weeks, I was moved by a lot of David’s prayers. He struggled a lot with following God’s leading in his life. One psalm that stuck out was Psalm 25, where David says, “In you, Lord my God, I put my trust… Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long” (Ps25:1,4-5). When we pray like this, wanting to follow the way God is going, the spirit of truth will show us which way to go.

Today, we’ve learned from Jesus that the Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth, that he guides us to truth, speaks to us the truth, and can show us the truth before us. But today’s study is more than just an inquiry into the nature of the Holy Spirit. It’s an invitation to go on a journey. Jesus promises that we can be guided into “all the truth” through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. What’s guiding your life? How are you seeking God in your life? How are you making decisions in your life? May we come to know and rely on the Spirit of truth, to show us who God is and show us the truth of our lives. And may we people who live by the truth of God, in so being lights in this dark world.