

John 14:1-14

14 "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. 4 And you know the way to where I am going." 5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." 8 Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. 12 "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. 13 Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

Read verses 1-4.

Jesus is anticipating his death, and his disciples' reaction to it. The promised Messiah ended the reign of death over God's people and the earth. He brought individual salvation and world renewal on a cosmic scale. Jesus is telling his disciples that he is going to prepare a place for them in his Father's house. They need not fear death, nor need they anticipate anything less than an actual place with God the Father.

In this promise are found two of the great blessings of salvation: intimate fellowship with God and an eternal dwelling place with Him. The world in which we live now was created as a perfect world. Originally, God dwelt with man in unhindered fellowship. As people we will not be satisfied until we obtain the place that Jesus promises to his disciples. On the one hand, these verses affirm something that we all know to be true. Places matter to us. We care about their appearance, their safety and their future. To be homeless is truly a terrible situation. We were made by God to inhabit places. On the other hand, the places that we inhabit in this life are not, and will never be perfectly satisfying.

How do you think verses 1-4 shape the way in which Jesus' disciples carry out his mission after the ascension?

How do these verses address your fears on the one hand, and your future plans and goals for your life on the other hand? (What are your fears and future plans and goals? How do they appear to you when laid beside these verses?)

Read 5-12.

These verses emphasize the personal relationship that Jesus' has with his Father and the personal relationship that he offers us. Tim Keller (following many others) has observed that the personal knowing God is essence of Christianity. Everything else comes after this personal knowing. One of the places where there is evident is in the prayers of the Bible. The great prayers of bible are not like our prayers. We pray for success and power. These great prayers are prayers for knowledge. (See Ephesians 1 and 3 for examples.) If you consider the problems of your life as a big knot that is all tangled, then the personal knowledge of God is the one strand that you can pull to untangle the whole knot.

The exclusivity of Christianity--I am the way the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me--is the logical corollary of the personal nature of real relationship with God. There is a real person of Jesus Christ. He has real character, real power, real authority. He has every right because of who he is to establish the terms on which he will be known. At a human level we accept this: can you imagine a young man dictating to a young woman the terms on which she will reveal herself to him? No. If he wants to know her personally, then he will have to yield to the terms on which she is willing to make herself known--the places where she is willing to meet him, the topics that she is willing to discuss, etc.

Are your prayers more focused on knowing God or getting things?

Verse 9 should challenge us all to consider something important: it is possible to be near to Jesus and not know him. Would you characterize your own experience as being near to Jesus or as knowing Jesus? How can you know the difference?

If you have been near to Jesus, but have not known him then verses 10-11 tell you where to turn to know him. Study his words and his works. Ask Him to show himself to you in your study. (This is, of course, the way that we continue to grow in our knowledge of Jesus too.)

Read 12-14.

There are various views of what constitutes "greater works" in verse 12. A very reasonable view in context is that Jesus is telling his disciples that their ministry will be more vast in terms of the numbers of people that they reach. They will touch more people in their earthly ministry than he did. They will do these works on the foundation of his atoning death and resurrection--in that sense, these works are Jesus' works. The overarching point that Jesus is making here is that the disciples will not be left powerless for ministry when Jesus is gone. On the contrary, they will continue to see people transformed in powerful ways. They are to obtain this fruit by prayer. What they ask in Jesus' name--according to his will, character and authority--they will accomplish.

Verses 13-14 are a bold promise from Jesus. Have you ever considered that we do not see as much as we would like to see in terms of spiritual fruit in ourselves, our friends and our churches because we do not ask "in the name of Jesus." To pray in Jesus' name means to approach God only on the basis of his merits (you come in his name, not your own), to want what he wants in prayer (your desires in prayer are malleable), and to make his agenda your own (to the degree you are able in the moment, you seize upon the teaching of Scripture and pray accordingly).

How is the notion of praying in Jesus' name liberating?

How is the notion of praying in Jesus' name challenging?

Are your prayers characterized by what you know God wants to see happen in your life, or by what you hope he wants to happen in your life (which often corresponds to what you want to happen as well!)?

Group project: A few folks in your group could consider taking one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit and committing to pray for each other daily, asking the Father in the name of Jesus to realize this fruit in your lives.

John 14:15-24

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.

Read verses 15 and 21. While all commands are included, given the teaching of John 13, which commandment is especially in view here? What does this tell us about the importance of our attitude toward other Christians?

Obeying the commandments of Jesus does not produce love; rather, obedience is the consequence of love. While these verses are challenging, they are a great blessing. The commandments of God reveal the true picture of our heart toward. The reality is that if we don't care anything about other believers, the church or the will of God then we should fool ourselves into thinking that we love God. This means that "fire insurance faith"--the notion that we believe in Jesus to escape hell while living like we are headed there--is not faith at all. If we know Jesus and love him, then we will care deeply enough about his will to have a general pattern obeying him. We will struggle of course, but it will be a struggle grounded in a sense of Christ's love for us.

We are constantly tempted to fashion as Christ after our own desires and cultural preferences. Such a Christ is loved effortlessly because he is in our image. Jesus' teaching does not allow this to continue. His commandments shatter our "cultural Christs" and call us to follow the Christ who is faithfully. What areas of the ethical teaching of the Bible are you most in tension with as you live our your life in this world, while not being of this world?

How can you joyfully love other believers with whom you do not naturally "click," or perhaps even irritate you?

The first study showed that Jesus' promised that his disciples would do greater works than he did. Verses 16-17 show how this will be possible. In the person of Jesus Christ, God dwelt with the disciples in the flesh. When Christ ascends to his father, he will continue to dwell with them through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus says that the Holy Spirit is "another Helper." Jesus himself was the first "Helper." The Greek work used is *paraclete*. It is well attested in extra-biblical literature as a legal word. *Para* is a prefix that means beside. *Kaleo* is a verb that means to speak. The "para-klete" is the one who stands beside you to represent you in court. The Latin word for this is *advocario*, from which we get the english word *advocate*. So, John writes in 1st John 2:1, "But if anyone does sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Jesus stands interceding for us as our advocate before the Heavenly Father. The Father sent him for this very purpose. Helper is a good word as well, so long as we see the gravity and uniqueness of the help that Jesus provides as our advocate.

There are some personal questions upon which you can reflect to determine whether or not you understand that Jesus is your advocate. It is quite possible to have been involved in many Christian activities and still not know Jesus as your advocate.

- (1) Do you readily admit that before the purity of God the stains of your character and action cannot stand?
- (2) Do you take criticism well? Why or why not?
- (3) Are you devastated when you fail because you know that your whole life was riding on achieving a particular goal?
- (4) Have you asked Jesus to be your advocate, the one who has taken judgment in your place?
- (5) Do you struggle with guilt, even when you are not in a pattern of sin?
- (6) Do you feel like a second class citizen of God's kingdom or a step-child in God's family?
- (7) Do you see God more as judge than loving Father?

Jesus is our advocate in heaven. Everyone who receives him as advocate automatically receives the Holy Spirit. This is important: you do not get the ministry of the Holy Spirit by focusing on becoming more spiritual. The Holy Spirit comes as a consequence of your relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit is our "Helper" on earth. He (Note: The Holy Spirit is a "He" and not an "It.") speaks to our spirit on behalf of Christ. And, he speaks to God on behalf of our spirit. Andreas Kostenberger has suggested that "Helpful presence" is a good way to translated *paraclete* when it comes to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is a helpful, strengthening presence in our lives.

First, He speaks to our spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who unites us to Jesus Christ and bears witness to our spirit that we are truly God's children. "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:15). Like a loving Father on earth, God the Father desires that we know that he love us as his children. John says that he is 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" (John 14:17). We see that the Holy Spirit is uniquely given to the children of God.

Second, the Holy Spirit speaks to God on our behalf. "Likewise the spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words" (Romans 8:26). This is a mysterious, comforting verse. We can have confidence that the Holy Spirit, who indwells us, ensures perfect personal communication with our Father in Heaven. This teaching should give us great confidence in prayer.

Third, John says that the Holy Spirit helps us to understand who Jesus is. He is the key to growing in our relationship with Christ. "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" (John 14:26). While there is a primary fulfillment of this verse in the disciples' own ministry, the Holy Spirit continually works in the lives of believers to enable us to understand who Jesus is.

Fourth, John emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in continually advancing Jesus' ministry on earth while the Lord Himself reigns in heaven. The Helper will "bear witness" about Jesus (15:26), convicting the world "concerning sin, righteousness and judgment (16:7-8).

To become a believer someone needs to know who Jesus is (a witness), why they need him (sin), what he accomplished to save them (righteousness), and the eternal implications of their decisions about Jesus (judgment). Thus, we see that the Holy Spirit is the one who accomplishes true Christian ministry. We are his agents, but He is the powerful presence of God that makes ministry effective.

When it comes to the Holy Spirit as your Helper, do you have an experience of God's love in your life? How does this happen in your life? (If you do not experience the love of God in your life then join with a person in your group to explore more deeply Jesus as your advocate and prayerfully seek assurance of God's love.)

When it comes to the Holy Spirit as the Helping Presence in your life, do you have confidence that God hears your prayers even in times of weakness? (Can you share a time when a prayer offered in weakness was answered?)

How does the Holy Spirit's role in advancing Jesus' kingdom (the fourth aspect discussed above) give us freedom and boldness in our ministries to those around us?

Verses 21-23 speak of Jesus making himself manifest to the believer who loves him. In verse 23 he says, "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" (John 21:23). This word for home is the same word for "place" used in John 14:2.

Many scholars take "home" in a spiritual sense, and see Jesus promising greater and greater intimacy with him and the Father. Those who take this view see an anticipation of the final climactic homecoming: ""Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God" (Revelation 21:3). I see the verse primarily referring to this final homecoming. Jesus is pointing to the future reality of the kingdom of God coming to earth as it is in heaven. Our future life with God will be more real, concrete and physical than this life, not less.

Do you long for your future life with God to be brought to final realization? Why or why not?

John 14:25-31

"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.

Verse 29 is important for Christian realism. Jesus did not want his disciples to be taken off guard by the troubles that would come to him and to them. He is speaking especially of his crucifixion here. When that happens, he wants them to believe in him, not lose their faith. Having faith in a Crucified messiah was countercultural. An earthly Messiah would remain with them and take away all difficulties. Instead, Jesus will be crucified and many of their troubles will remain until he returns. But, the peace that Jesus give is not of this world. He cannot be taken away by our circumstances, but abounds in and through them. It is a peace with God that overflows into ever area of our lives.

Jesus was a wise pastor in preparing his disciples for the trouble that he and they would face. Sometimes, we have been called to faith in Jesus with no warning at all. The results can be shocking: we think that things are going to get "better" as we understand better. Sometimes we are caught off guard when things do not go as we planned them. When you think about following Jesus, what troubles in your Christian life have caught you most "off guard?"

What does it look like to have faith in Christ in the midst of these troubles?

From these studies in John 14, we can see that there is a firm basis for the peace that Jesus provides. The peace that Jesus gives is the antidote to our troubled hearts and fears (14:27). What is troubling you or giving you fear today? How do the truths of this chapter give you and experience of the peace that you have you in Jesus Christ?

Verse 30 is very important for our understanding of the person of Christ and his atoning death on the cross. Jesus was sinless--that is why the ruler of this world had no claim on him. When he was crucified, he died as the only sinless man to ever live. Others who were crucified in Jesus' day were guilty of a crime of some kind. Jesus went to the cross not because he was guilty, but to fulfill the commandment of his Father for our salvation.

The beauty of the gospel is that the blamelessness of Jesus is imputed to those who are blameworthy, to those upon whom the ruler of this world would indeed have a claim. Close your time as a group praising God in prayer for making you blameless in Christ.