

The Spirit's Ministry in Jesus' Absence*John 16:5-11*

Introduction: We are called to be witnesses for Christ. This is part of our mission in this world. Thankfully, we are not alone in this grand task. In the passage that we are considering today, Jesus explains how the Holy Spirit works to show people their true spiritual condition. Because of what the Spirit does, we can whole-heartedly engage this mission with great hope and expectation.

Read John 16:5-11

1. Why would it be to the disciples' advantage that Jesus go away?
2. What does Jesus say about the role of the Holy Spirit in the world?

Steve said:

This knowledge of the Holy Spirit's work should fill us with anticipation about what He is doing in the lives of others, in the lives of the people we care deeply about. If you're a believer and you care deeply about others, you will naturally want them to experience the life you've experienced in Christ. But sometimes we have so very little faith that our friends will come to Christ because we feel like it's up to us to make something happen. But as we talked about last week, we're merely called to be witnesses - faithfully and transparently sharing our experience with Christ. As we are witnesses, we need to know that the Holy Spirit is the One doing the deep work of showing people their true condition.

3. Do you ever feel like it is up to you to "make something happen" when it comes to helping people respond to the gospel? Explain.
4. How might truly believing Jesus' words here about the work of the Holy Spirit in people's lives help you live with anticipation in being a witness for Christ?

Steve said:

George Hunter III makes the point that in the western world today, the typical church tends to ignore two populations year after year: 1) those who aren't refined enough to feel comfortable with us, and 2) those too "out of control" for church people to feel comfortable with them. To me that suggests that churches tend to think in very human, sociological terms instead of dreaming about what the Holy Spirit might be doing in their city. But one thing that's clear from reading the gospels is that the most unlikely of people tend to respond to the good news about Christ - sinners and tax-collectors, lepers, those who were blind, etc.

5. Do you have any "most unlikely" to respond to the gospel kind of people in your life? If so, how does this passage affect how you think about the possibility of them responding to Christ?

6. If we are thinking biblically about the process of seeing someone come to faith in Christ, what is the Spirit's part and what is our part?

Steve said:

I really think that this is a matter of faith for us. We need to believe that the Holy Spirit still does this same work in the lives of people today. Too often we assume that our experience will be the opposite of what this passage teaches. We assume that the Holy Spirit probably wouldn't do anything very mysterious or adventurous or dangerous in and through us. We are living in the days of fulfillment that Jesus was teaching about! We need to believe that the Holy Spirit still does this work of showing people their true condition in our day and in our city and in the lives of the people we know and love.

7. On a scale from 1 - 10 (1 = low; 10 = high) how would you rate your belief that God can use you to help bring someone to faith in Christ? How has considering the role of the Holy Spirit affected how you think about this?