

RUF Bible Study – John
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John 16 –

Let's think about two situations – one is personal and the other is historical.

I've been listening to a ton of This American Life (a radio show on National Public Radio produced by Ira Glass), and one of the first shows I heard was called "The Break Up." Most of the show focused on a woman who had recently gotten dumped by her boyfriend Andrew. She decided she was going to write a break-up song, despite the fact she had no musical ability. She loved break up songs, and would listen to them all day long during this period. They were so, so sad and said exactly what she felt. She wanted him back. She knew it was wrong and pathetic, but she couldn't help the way she felt.

She ended up being able to talk to Phil Collins on the phone, who helped her not only process her song writing, but her grief. And his own grief. She received other help and pulled together a song, that she secretly hoped her ex-boyfriend would hear and that would make him come to his senses, and he would return to her loving arms.

Is writing the song the thing that would ultimately help her? What more did she need?

Here's the historical situation – why do we have the Christian religion? Do you realize how incredibly improbable it is that something like this would ever make it? There were and are many religions vying for attention from all the people. There were religions much better suited to the people of the times of the Bible. And this man, Jesus of Nazareth, he did attract quite a following, but when you read his teachings, they are filled with strange, unusual and challenging ideas. They don't really mesh well with the culture, then or now. We forget that because we're so used to things now. But they really are strange.

AND – the leader of this tiny band of people dies. Not only does he die, but it's a gruesome death of a criminal. Crucified on a cross like a terrorist. That doesn't inspire much confidence. His disciples are scattered. They wilt, wither and betray him. It just doesn't look good.

But here we are 2000 years later talking about him and them. There were other religious leaders, thousands of them. We don't talk about them. Why this one? Why Jesus of Nazareth?

Why You Need It

John 16 is a passage about the Holy Spirit. Jesus teaches his disciples about the Holy Spirit, and we get to listen into his conversation.

You need this because it helps to explain why we have the church. Why the historical impossibility became a reality. This isn't a huge proof or anything, but you have to take into account of why the church exists, and against what incredible odds it has not only existed but grown and even thrived.

Jesus says that's because the Holy Spirit would be with his disciples, and all his people. The Holy Spirit would guide them, strengthen them, comfort them, embolden them and help them.

These men (and women) were not natural leaders. They didn't have an impressive background. They were faced with impossible odds. Yet they were used to change the world. They died for their cause, were killed for the sake of someone they believed in.

If you are questioning Christianity or just going through a period of doubt right now, think about the church. Think about how it could be here at all. This is not a religion for winners, like it is often portrayed as. The leader of it sure seemed to be a loser. The followers of it were losers. And yet it took hold and flourished. Why is that?

It think it's because of the Holy Spirit.

That is all well and good, but what about your own life? Why do you need the Holy Spirit?

Remember where we are in this passage of John 16. Jesus is about to die. He is in his last days on earth. He has already had his last supper with his disciples, and he faces a soon and certain death, which he knows is coming for he has orchestrated it. The disciples are confused. They don't know what it going on. They feel harassed. They feel oppressed. They think Jesus is going to walk into Jerusalem in triumph, and yet he keeps talking about his death and betrayal.

In 16:1-2 Jesus says that they will be put out of their synagogues, and they will be handed over for death. In 16:20, Jesus tells them how they will weep and lament. They will be sorrowful, and it will feel like they are in the pains of childbirth.

I have witnessed the pains of childbirth, and believe me it seems painful. These are not going to be happy times.

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Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By Doug Serven, © Doug Serven, 2008, website: www.ouruf.org. For this series, I used commentaries on John from Boice, Skip Ryan, Gary Burge, D.A. Carson, Hughes, Wright, Calvin and Leon Morris and listened to sermons by as many people as I can find, especially Tim Keller, Ricky Jones, Fred Harrell and Scott Sherman. The reader should assume that none of the ideas expressed are original to me.

Although the context here is Jesus' crucifixion, you can find these themes all throughout the Bible and the New Testament. The Bible tells us that there will be suffering. Intense suffering. Weeping and wailing even. There will be confusion, even if you walk with Jesus. Maybe *because* you are walking with Jesus.

I don't know what it will be for you to experience those times. I'm sure you have felt them already.

There's a youtube video going around OU that features the drunk Alpha Chi girl weeping uncontrollably because she has just puked at a party and gotten kicked out. She's worried she may have to leave the sorority. It is funny how intoxicatedly sad and unreasonable she is. But there is a pathos about it. She is undone by this. She is in severe pain. And I feel for her.

We all have those things that get to us, that we want more than life itself. Maybe it's your relationship with your boyfriend back, though you hate to admit it. You might experience this when you don't get accepted to the graduate school you wanted. Woe is me! Or you don't get asked out weekend after weekend. What is wrong with me? Or your parents put intense pressure on you to perform.

You need something else. You need something higher and better and outside of yourself to help you.

What It Is

You need God in you. You need the Holy Spirit. That is what Jesus promises here. In the suffering and heartache, the confusion and the depression, you don't have to rely on yourself. God is there. God is with you. God is in you. God is speaking to you.

Friends, you need that. That is so important for you to have and understand. Christianity isn't just something out there for you to study and realize and understand. It's something in you. God in you. That is a powerful message and a powerful difference. You aren't God. But God does reside in you, changing you.

The Bible doesn't ever mention the word "trinity." It's a word theologians have coined in order to talk about what they have read about and witnessed in the Bible. But the concept and teaching of the trinity is in the Bible.

From the very beginning in Genesis 1, the Spirit was there at creation. The Spirit was hovering over the waters. God said, Let us make man in our image. Obviously, that states or at least implies a plurality. The Spirit "comes on" people in the Old Testament, giving them faith or strength, or doing things that only God can do.

We see this more clearly in the New Testament. Think of Jesus' baptism, when all three were present. Jesus was being baptized, the Father was speaking and watching, and the Holy Spirit descended onto him. Think of when Jesus talks about the Great Commission in Matthew 28 and he says, "Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

We say that God is one substance, but he is three persons. So we have the three in one. This is a mystery that I cannot explain, but can only observe in the Bible and believe by faith. I cannot prove it to you, but I do think it matters that you believe it. We don't believe in three gods (tritheism). We don't believe in one god that moves around in three forms (modalism). We believe in one God, the same in substance, equal in power, who is in three persons.

Like I said, you need the Holy Spirit. God is too great for you. Jesus is sitting in heaven, at the right hand of God the father, praying and interceding for you. The Holy Spirit is in you. You are his temple. He resides there. Thus God isn't "up there" but he is "right there" in you.

Jesus says that this is the best thing. He tells his disciples in verse 7 that it is better for them if he goes away so the Holy Spirit can come to them. This is to their advantage.

That is amazing. That means it is better for us to live on this side of the cross than if we actually were there with Jesus! Do you realize that? Sometimes you may (I know I have) wish you were there walking with Jesus. If you had only been there, you would have been the most amazing disciple, I'm sure.

But Jesus says that it's better for us to be here. We have all the scriptures after all. We have the history of the church. We stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. We stand in the company with so many more witnesses. And all of us have the Holy Spirit in a way that even the disciples didn't have.

Do you have God in you? Do you have the Holy Spirit to talk to?

What It Does

That's great. So what does the Holy Spirit do?

This is a big question. We see a ton of stuff on television these days. The Holy Spirit seems to be everywhere, and he appears to be doing all sorts of crazy and amazing things. I remember hanging out with a girl I really like when I was in high school. We were from different towns, so I didn't get to see her very often, and I didn't really know much about her except she played basketball on the team and was really good. I was pretty good at basketball too (at least I thought I was).

She was also really religious. That was okay, because so was I. I was youth group president and in the youth choir, and went to church camp, etc. So we were on the same page. Both religious. Both interested in each other.

She kept on asking me if I had been baptized in the Spirit. I kept on saying yes. Then she'd talk a little more about things that I couldn't quite follow. She'd ask again if I'd been baptized in the Spirit. I'd say yes, and she'd continue.

It wasn't until years later that I figured out she was asking me if I spoke in tongues or not. Why didn't she just ask me that? I thought she was asking if I had been baptized, since of course I was baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Needless to say, I was confused, and I don't think I am the only out there.

I'm not going to try to give a full defense of all my beliefs about this, but I do want to point out what this text says about the Holy Spirit and what he does.

Holy Spirit's Words – the words of Jesus

In this passage, Jesus explains what the Holy Spirit will say to us. It's not really a mystery. It's not really something very magical or mind-blowing. It is this – the Holy Spirit speaks the Bible.

That's right. In John 16:13, we read, "And when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you in all truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak." I think that means that the Holy Spirit's language is Bible. He points you to the words of Jesus, the words of the Scripture.

What does this mean for us? First, I think it means we need to know more Bible. We need to give the Holy Spirit a bigger vocabulary in which to speak.

If you know four Russian words: "babuska," "piva," "glasnost" and "perestroika" – how well are you going to do in St. Petersburg? Not well. Those words may come up every once in awhile, but probably not that often ("vodka" would be more useful). I've traveled enough to have experienced. If someone is talking to me, I am thinking, "I know you're talking. I can hear you talking, but I can't understand a word out of your mouth." In fact, it grows tiresome and I stop listening at all. It's exhausting and I tune out. What if someone is trying to tell me something important. I just miss it, and I make up my own way.

But what if you're Sally Schupack, and you've grown up speaking Russian? What if your vocabulary is huge and growing? Then you can hear. You can operate. You can function. You can make better choices. You can communicate.

The words the Holy Spirit speaks aren't really that mysterious. They are Bible words. You should read the Bible more, and more broadly, so you can give him more vocabulary to speak. He speaks from the words and stories of John. From Philippians. From James. But also from Micah, from Isaiah, from Deuteronomy and from 2 Samuel. Read the Bible. Memorize the Bible.

Be wary of saying that God is telling you things that the Bible doesn't say. I don't really think the Bible tells men to break up with their girlfriends, though I hear this all the time. "God told me to break up with you." Really? I would argue with that, which is exactly what the person doesn't want me to do. That sentence seems unassailable. I think it's a cop-out, like it's blaming God.

God might lead you to break up with a girl, but be a man enough to say you don't want to be with her. That you are confused, and God says "Do not be anxious." That you are scared, and God says, "I will lead you in perfect peace." That you realize that you don't want to be with her or you don't like her any more or maybe even it's just the timing is wrong, and God says, "Do not deceive one another."

Can the Holy Spirit talk to you like that? Are you giving him a vocabulary in which to speak to you? Are you reading and meditating on the Bible.

Joshua 1:8 says, "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."

Holy Spirit's Work – point to Jesus and his work²

If that is what the Holy Spirit says, then what does the Holy Spirit do? The Holy Spirit points to Jesus and his work. The Holy Spirit isn't interested in promoting himself. He puts the spotlight on Jesus. On Jesus' words as we've just mentioned, and also on Jesus' work of redemption and restoration.

Look at the text. There are some interesting things in there.

We've been mentioning all along the way as we've worked through John that it seems like Jesus is on trial. He is constantly being help up and examined. He's been rebutted and questioned. He often turns the tables on his accusers in the end, but he's on trial. And he's on trial in our hearts too. We don't believe him. We try to poke holes in his life. Our world certainly does that. They say his testimony cannot be trusted.

We have more trial language here in regards to the Holy Spirit.

The first word we get is *Parakaleo* in verse 7. This is translated as "Helper" in the ESV. It is also translated as Counselor, or Comforter. Helper seems a little weak to us, but it works.

The Holy Spirit is on your side. The Holy Spirit speaks for you and defends you. The Holy Spirit is there with you. He's your counselor. He gives you advice and wisdom. He stands up and gives a defense for you.

Isn't that good news? Don't you need someone like that when you screw up? When you're being accused? When you feel like you're being thrown under the bus of your own conscience? When you've gotten yourself in the same situation? Or when you are telling yourself that no one likes you, no one loves you?

The Holy Spirit is there for you.

But he does something else. Not only is he a *Parakaleo*, but he's also an *Elenko*. This word comes up in verse 8: *And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.* The Holy Spirit is not only a Comforter, but he's also a Convict-er.

² This part is heavily influenced by Tim Keller's sermon on this passage.

So if you think the Holy Spirit or God should always be telling you how awesome you are, then you are wrong. The Holy Spirit, because it is concerned about the words and work of Jesus, does and should be alerting you when you are out of accord with that life and teaching. He not only defends you, but he accuses you. He brings the witness of your life and heart against you. He convicts you of how you are going astray.

Does that happen to you? Is that happening to you?

There should be times in your life when you are being brought low.

It's often the case that people who aren't Christians still hang around church or Christianity. That's certainly true here at OU. You can get fairly numbed to hearing about things of faith. Maybe it's your parents' religion, and one you have just fallen into.

You may notice, for this is very common, that a pastor or preacher or teacher may begin to bother you. How dare he! He has no right! How intolerant! How judgmental! You could actually find yourself hating Christianity and what it stands for. I would submit that you may be actually understanding Christianity for the first time at that point. If you've never been offended by the teachings of Jesus, then I don't think you have really, really heard them. If you are never offended by the message of the gospel, then it could be true that you have never really heard it.

If you continue to sit and listen and process, you may find something happen. You may find that you start to agree a little more. The Holy Spirit is at work. First he convicts you of your sin. That you aren't right. That you can't set yourself right.

That you in fact are a sinner who needs grace. That you are more desperately wicked than you ever dared to believe about yourself. That you are not a good person. That you will mess up your own life if you keep living this way.

You have been and are being convicted about your sin. You are being exposed and prosecuted. You are being convinced of your need of a savior. You must see your need. If you think you are fine, then you are lost.

Next the Holy Spirit convinces you and convicts you concerning righteousness. Specifically – your own righteousness is not adequate. The Holy Spirit will start to point out that you cannot be good enough. You cannot be perfect enough, or smart enough, or disciplined enough or funny enough or pretty enough.

Whatever you're trying to cover up your failures just won't work. You're just trying to be a better person, but the problem is YOU. You are obsessed with working out. You are in the gym for hours every day. You're thinking, if I were just stronger, skinnier, healthier or harder – I would be accepted and would be okay. But that doesn't change your heart.

You can volunteer with Habitat for Humanity. It won't change your heart. You can stop drinking and go for a second virginity – and I think you should – but it won't change your heart.

Your goodness won't ever add up before God. It will never ever change you. You have to be convicted not only of your sin, but also of your righteousness. Our campus is filled with people who think they are good, are trying to do good things, and who are not in peace with God.

There is a realization where you understand not only are your bad things keeping you from God, but also your good things are. You need to repent of your unrighteousness and also of your righteousness. That is a deeper step that the Holy Spirit works in you.

And lastly the Holy Spirit convicts you concerning judgment, because the ruler of the world is judged. I think that means that you have to fully give your life over to Jesus. The Holy Spirit will continue his prosecuting work, telling you of places and things in your life you keep holding back from God. The life of the Spirit is one in which you are giving all of yourself to God. You don't keep away your sexuality, or your internet usage, or your drinking problem or your masturbation, or your finances, or your shopping addiction, or your hatred of your brother, or your idolatry of marriage or your obsession with always having the latest technology – you cannot hold those things back. The ruler of the this world does NOT rule in your hearts. The Holy Spirit convicts you of places in your heart that you want to keep from Jesus.

As you might guess, the Holy Spirit has a lot of work to do. Your heart is a mess. But he is diligent. He is at work bringing these things to your heart and mind. Are you listening to him?

Remember that he is not only the one prosecuting you, but he is also your Helper and Counselor. He speaks for you, for he wants the best for you. He loves you. God loves you. The Holy Spirit is busy bringing these things up so you can live a life of love, peace, and joy. Not because he hates you and is out to destroy you. He's trying to get rid of the things that want to destroy you.

Let him do his work.

Holy Spirit's Welcome– Jesus is coming back!!

This can all be a little distressing. It doesn't sound like much fun, and it isn't. I hate it and love it when I am convicted of sin. Repentance is terrible and wonderful.

There is hope though, because Jesus tells us that he is coming back. He is not just leaving us, but he will return. In the context of this discussion with his disciples, Jesus is talking about his death and resurrection. That is where he turn confusion and sadness into hope.

This is our story. This is the center of our lives. This is the center of history. Some people will try to tell you that the resurrection of Jesus doesn't matter. That we can listen to his teachings and live good lives without his death and resurrection. I am telling you that is crazy. Jesus himself doesn't believe that.

Without the resurrection, his death, his teachings and his life are meaningless. They are a fraud. They are worse than any person's normal life, for he claimed to be God.

This is why all this matters.

No woman wants to go through childbirth just for itself. There is the satisfaction of bringing your child into the world. As exhausting and painful as it is, when the nurse lays that baby on your chest, it all seems worth it. You love that baby.

The same is true running a marathon. It is a lot of pain to train to go so far. You end up running hundreds of miles just so you can run 26.2 miles. It seems crazy. But there's something about it that makes all the pain worth it.

Jesus says that resurrection makes the death worth it. Christians aren't just interested in pain and suffering. But we know, we experience that we have to go through death into to experience rebirth.

The Holy Spirit is about that work, because it is the work of Jesus. The Holy Spirit cares about you in that way – in the way of Jesus' very life and work. That the Old You would be dying and the New You would be coming more to life. That the things that are hurting you, your relationships with others, and your relationship to God would be dying, so new life and can be reborn and flourish.

Jesus says the hour has come. His redemption is near. His time is at hand.

Have you moved from merely hearing about this or arguing with this, to experiencing this? Are you experiencing the work of the Holy Spirit? Are you convicted of sin? Do you ever say you're sorry? Do you need to talk to God about this?

Are you worshipping God or are you just sitting there listening? Are you arguing with God? That is better than just passively accepting everything you hear.

Jesus asks the question at the end of this passage, Do you now believe?

Do you believe?

Jesus will conquer. He will overcome. He has overcome. But his kingdom may not look quite like you thought it would. Are you on and with his agenda or are you off on your own? Are you hearing the words of the Spirit talking to you? Are you looking to something else to give you relief from your break up? Are you searching for some other explanation to the rise of the church?

It is the Holy Spirit. God himself. Ask him this day, and he will answer you. Don't ask for small thing, but big ones, like that he would change your heart and the hearts of those around you.

“Father, I want to know you, but my coward heart fears to give up its toys. I cannot part with them without inward bleeding, and I do not try to hide from you the terror of the parting. I come trembling, but I do come. Please root from my heart all those things which I have cherished so long and which have become a very part of my living self, so that you may enter and dwell there without a rival. Then you shall make the place of your feet glorious. Then shall my heart have no need of the sun to shine in it, for yourself will be the light of it, and there shall be no night there. In Jesus' name, Amen. A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*, 30