

LESSON 11

*March 6-12

The Spirit “Replaces” Jesus



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *John 13:31–16:33.*

Memory Text: “**But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you’**” (*John 16:7, NIV*).

Key Thought: Life without a sense of Jesus' presence is empty. When He left earth, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to fill the place that He had held in the lives of His disciples. As hard as it was for His disciples to grasp, this arrangement was better for them than His physical presence had been.

The Spirit was sent to continue and enhance Jesus' work on earth. After the foot washing, the shadow of the Cross began to hang over the room where Jesus and His disciples were reclining. Christ's last moments with them had come. They began to realize that Jesus was about to leave them. In John 13 to 16 Jesus delivers a farewell speech to His disciples in which He teaches them how to live without His physical presence, just as the second generation of Christians would have to live without the physical presence of the disciples.

How important for us, many generations removed from the time of Christ, to realize that the physical absence of Jesus is no handicap to us or to our walk with Him. We can be all He wants us to be, here and now, even while He is not among us as He was among the disciples. Through the presence of the Holy Spirit, Jesus' word is still as good as His touch.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 13.*

SUNDAY *March 7*

Going Away (*John 13:31–14:31*).

Jesus waited until the departure of Judas (*John 13:28-30*) to begin His farewell speech to His disciples. What followed was spoken for their encouragement—and ours.

What problems are Jesus and His disciples facing at this time? *John 13:33, 36.*

What impact does Jesus sense this would have on His disciples? *John 14:18.*

Jesus is going away, and the disciples are feeling abandoned. How can they possibly continue without Him? But Jesus makes it clear that His going away to the Father will benefit them.

What is one way in which the disciples are better off when Jesus goes to the Father? *See John 14:12-14. What is Jesus saying here?*

A key to understanding how the departure of Jesus would benefit the disciples is found in the statement that the disciples would do greater works than Jesus did (*John 14:12*). At first glance this statement seems preposterous. How could anyone do greater works than Jesus did? Yet, the earthly Jesus was subject to human limitations. He could be only in one place at a time. When He was with the disciples, the Father could be seen only in His person (*vs. 9*). But when He went to the Father, those specific limitations were left behind. Through the Spirit (*vss. 16, 17*), His disciples could represent the character of God throughout the world.

Because Jesus went to the Father and sent the Spirit, millions of disciples have extended Jesus' work. And through the works and the writings of the disciples, Jesus has become real to millions around the globe. In a sense, the disciples of Jesus took His place in the world. The words and actions of believers may be the only picture of Jesus some people will ever see.

Think of those with whom you have been in personal contact in the past 24 hours. Was your influence on them such that they would have been more interested in knowing the God whom you profess to serve, or would you have turned them off? Be honest with yourself.

MONDAY March 8

Remaining Connected to Jesus *(John 15:1–16:33)*.

In John 15:1-8, Jesus gives the beautiful analogy of the vine and the branches. How does one “remain in the vine”? *John 15:6, 7, 9, 10.*

The relationship of Jesus with the Father is the model for the disciples’ relationship with Jesus. Jesus loves the disciples the way the Father loves Him (*John 15:9*). On the other hand, the disciples are to obey His commands just as He obeys the commands of His Father (*vs. 10*).

How are the disciples to cope with the loss of Jesus’ personal presence? *John 15:26, 27; 16:7.*

The relationship of Jesus with the world is paralleled in the relationship of the disciples with unbelievers (*John 15:18*). The world’s hatred of the disciples is rooted in its hatred of Jesus (*vss. 22-25*). The values of the world are often the opposite of God’s values; at times, they are in direct conflict. Thus, the disciples need to be ready to face the hostility of the world.

For the disciples, the negative experience of hatred and persecution (*vss. 18-25, 16:1-4*) is counterbalanced by the benefits that will come because Jesus has gone to the Father and has sent His Spirit (*John 15:26, 27; 16:7-15*).

Why was it better that Jesus was going away? (1) He would send the Holy Spirit, who would not be subject to human limitations. (2) Through the efforts of the disciples, the work of Jesus would be spread throughout the world and would impact every people and place. (3) The love they would have through the Spirit (*John 15:12-15*) would have convincing power in the world (*John 13:34, 35*). (4) Coping with the absence of Jesus would enable the disciples to provide a solid foundation for those who followed their generation (*John 15:1-8*).

Read John 14:21, 23 and 15:10-14. What link does the Lord show between love and the commandments? In your own experience, how have you seen the inseparable link between love and the commandments? How are these linked with “remaining in the vine”?



TUESDAY *March 9*

Seeds of the Spirit (*John 1:32, 33; 3:5-8; 4:23, 24; 6:63; 7:37-39*).

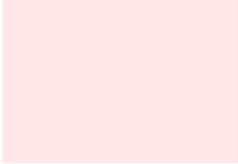
There are eleven passages in the Gospel of John that refer either directly or indirectly to the nature and work of the Holy Spirit. Five of these passages are located in the narrative section of the first half of the book. These passages mention the Spirit only in passing. It is as though John were using these passages to plant seeds in the reader’s mind that would sprout only in the fertile soil of Jesus’ farewell speech (*John 13–16*).

What can we learn about the work of the Spirit from **John 1:32, 33; 3:5-8; 4:23, 24; and 7:37-39?**

Although the Spirit makes several appearances in the first half of this Gospel, there is little information about Him. The Spirit makes it possible for the Baptist to identify Jesus at the Jordan (*John 1:32, 33*). He is an essential part of human participation in the kingdom of God (*John 3:5, 6*). Although His work cannot be controlled by human beings, His effect on people can be seen (*vs. 8*). Worship is no longer tied down to specific locations or temples, nor is it limited to any particular people (*John 4:23, 24*). He is available in every place and to anyone of any background through the words of Jesus (*John 6:63*).

The exact nature of the Spirit’s work would become manifest only in the context of the Cross (*John 7:39*). So, *John 7:37-39* is a transitional passage, preparing the reader for the clearer, more-detailed information about the Spirit’s work that comes in the farewell discourse of *John 13–16*. *John 20:22* (“And . . . he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’ ” [*NIV*]) shows that the promise of *John 7:39* in fact began to be fulfilled right after Jesus’ “glorification” on the cross.

In *John 14–16*, the title given to the Spirit is a Greek noun that can be translated as “Comforter” or “Counselor.” The root meaning of *paraclete* is a person who is called alongside to help someone. So the word can be used in the legal sense of a defense attorney at a trial who appeals in behalf of another or as one who comes to comfort someone who is overwhelmed with grief at a time of loss. Both meanings fit well into the context of *John 14–16*.



Just Like Jesus *(John 14:16, 17, 26, 27).*

Read carefully John 14:15-21, focusing specifically on verses 15 and 21. What are they saying? How do they relate the Spirit to the commandments? Why would these two truths be so closely connected? What does one have to do with the other?

Jesus calls the Holy Spirit “ ‘another Counselor’ ” *(John 14:16, NIV)*. This means the Holy Spirit is not the only Counselor (or Comforter); He is another Counselor. The original language emphasizes the similarity between Jesus and the Spirit. The Spirit is another Counselor just as Jesus is. Jesus is also the Counselor.

The disciples are feeling depressed. Jesus has said that He is going away, and they are distressed *(John 13:33, 36; 14:2-5)*. So, Jesus assures them they will not be left as “orphans” *(John 14:18, NIV)*. Through the Spirit, He will continue to be with them. The Spirit will do for them the same things Jesus did when He was physically on earth. The ultimate targets of this message, of course, are those who have come after, those who have come to believe through the words of the written Gospels, not through physical contact with Jesus or with anyone who knew Jesus in the flesh.

“Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally. Therefore it was for their interest that He should go to the Father, and send the Spirit to be His successor on earth. No one could then have any advantage because of his location or his personal contact with Christ. By the Spirit the Saviour would be accessible to all. In this sense He would be nearer to them than if He had not ascended on high.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 669.

Jesus also calls the Holy Spirit the “Spirit of truth” *(John 14:17)*. The person and work of the Spirit are authentic and real; they can be trusted. The Spirit will not guide us contrary to the truth about Jesus nor about ourselves. Truth can be painful to hear but is necessary to spiritual growth. Only those who are committed to truth, as manifested in obedience to the truth they already know, will receive the Spirit *(vss. 15, 16, 21)*. And how can we understand obedience apart from the commandments?

Look again at John 14:21. Jesus says that those who keep His commandments are those who love Him and that to these He will manifest Himself. How have you experienced this manifestation of Christ in your own life?

THURSDAY *March 11*

The Ultimate Guide *(John 15:26, 27; 16:7-15).*

What task of the Spirit is recorded in John 15:26?

In what three areas does the Holy Spirit bring conviction? *John 16:8-11*. **What two features of the Spirit's work are highlighted in John 16:13? Also, how do the commandments, as seen in the text for yesterday, fit in here? How are they all related?**

Jesus does not need the Holy Spirit to glorify Him in His person; the Father did that when He exalted Jesus to His right hand at the Ascension. The role of the Spirit is rather to exalt and glorify Jesus in the estimation of humanity here on earth. There are no revelations from the Spirit except those that exalt and glorify Jesus. As valuable as the work of the Spirit is, therefore, attention to the Spirit is not healthful if it directs our attention away from Jesus.

The Spirit is Christ's Successor and Representative with the disciples and to the world. It is in this sense that the Holy Spirit can be said to "replace" Jesus. The Spirit extends the presence of Jesus to the new generation that never knew His physical touch. The instruction that Jesus no longer could give in the flesh, the Spirit would do everywhere in His behalf. The witness that He would no longer bear, the Spirit would bear in His behalf. Through the Spirit, Jesus would continue to be glorified.

On the other hand, as Jesus brought judgment and conviction to all who were exposed to His light, so the Holy Spirit has a ministry also to the world, to bring conviction of sin, the offer of righteousness, and a warning of judgment to come. The world rejected Jesus and still does so today. But in spite of the world's continued rejection, the Spirit continues to convict, and people hear Jesus' voice through the voice of the Spirit.

Above all else, therefore, it is through the Spirit that the presence of Jesus is made real in our lives, even though we cannot see Him or touch Him. Although others may not share our experience, the Spirit changes the lives of those who enter into relationship with Jesus and yield themselves to the guidance and comfort of the Holy Spirit.

If someone were to ask you how the Holy Spirit has touched your life, what would you answer? What does your answer say to you about the state of your walk with the Lord? What changes might you need to make?

Further Study: “As the works of God are studied, the Holy Spirit flashes conviction into the mind. It is not the conviction that logical reasoning produces; but unless the mind has become too dark to know God, the eye too dim to see Him, the ear too dull to hear His voice, a deeper meaning is grasped, and the sublime, spiritual truths of the written word are impressed on the heart.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 24.

“It is one thing to assent in a general way to the agency of the Holy Spirit, and another thing to accept His work as a reprover calling to repentance. Many feel a sense of estrangement from God, a realization of their bondage to self and sin; they make efforts for reform; but they do not crucify self. They do not give themselves entirely into the hands of Christ, seeking for divine power to do His will. They are not willing to be molded after the divine similitude. In a general way they acknowledge their imperfections, but they do not give up their particular sins. With each wrong act the old selfish nature is gaining strength.”—Page 48.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 When Jesus said “I will do whatever you ask in my name” (*John 14:13, NIV*), how do you think He defined “whatever”? How would you interpret *John 15:7* in this regard?
- 2 What happens to Christians when they lose a major spiritual leader or mentor? What can one do to find new sources of spiritual strength? How much weight should we put upon anyone, no matter how much of a spiritual encouragement he or she has been?

Summary: In *John 13* to *16* Jesus taught His disciples how to live without His physical presence, just as the second generation of Christians would have to live without the physical presence of the disciples. As followers of Jesus manifest their desire for the truth through prayerful obedience to Jesus’ commands, the Spirit of truth comes to them. That Spirit reminds us of Jesus’ words and teachings (*John 14:26*), guides us into all truth, tells us what we need to know about the future (*John 16:13*), and glorifies Jesus on this earth (*vs. 15*). But to those who have rejected or ignored Jesus’ commands, the Spirit brings conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment (*vss. 8-11*).

Love Without Limits— Part 1

by RUTH SCHNEIDER TESCHE

God took me from being a complacent, pew-sitting Christian to becoming active in prison ministries. I had fought this change in my life all the way, but when I finally allowed God to work His will in my life, I found great happiness and joy in ministering to people in prison.

I had been involved in prison ministries for only a short time when I read a newspaper story about a terrible crime that was committed in the area of South Brazil where I live. I shuddered as I read the story and silently asked God to protect me from having to meet the monster who had committed that crime.

The warden and I had become friends. He often asks me to provide needed clothing and toiletries for prisoners whose families were too far away or too poor to provide these items for them. One day he mentioned that a new prisoner needed some things and asked me whether I could get him a change of clothes, shoes, and some toiletries. I agreed to go buy the needed items, and I asked for the man's name and sizes. I wrote the information down in my memo book beside the man's name, Luis.

When I returned to the prison with the items the warden had asked for, he told me, "You have no idea of the good you have just done for Jamir."

"Jamir?" I said, shocked. "I thought these things were for a prisoner named Luis." Jamir was the name of the man who had committed that terrible crime, the man I never wanted to meet or even think about. I struggled with myself for several moments, realizing that God had allowed me to hear the man's name wrong because I might have refused to help this Jamir if I had known the supplies were for him.

I have argued with God a lot about various issues in the past, and I sensed what He had in mind for me next. All the way home I argued with God about helping Jamir. But God gave me no peace until I agreed to pray for this man. And as I prayed for him, my attitude began to change.

(Continued next week)



RUTH SCHNEIDER TESCHE (left) lives with her family in Maringá, Paraná, Brazil, where she is active in prison ministries.