

# The Table

## Be Known. Be Loved.

### Week 2

*Lisa Scheffler, author*

Like a lot of college students, I earned money for school by waiting tables. One restaurant I worked at was fairly small and intimate — the kind of place with linen napkins and candles on each table. Every evening we'd have families come in to celebrate something special like a birthday, an anniversary, or just the end of a long week. Friends would gather after work to catch up and swap stories. At the smaller tables you would find couples chatting and holding hands across the white table cloth. The staff was always rooting for those who looked like they were on their first date.

There is an unmistakable din that creates the soundtrack of a busy restaurant — clinking dishes and dozens of conversations blending together. It's just enough background noise to give you the privacy to talk freely, even in a crowded room. In a comfortable setting, over good food and drink, stories are told, confidences are shared, and people can grow closer together. There is a reason we often choose to spend time with people we care about (or hope to care about) around a table.

We're in week 2 of our series called "The Table." Meaningful conversations around a table are not just nice to have, they could even be considered an important spiritual practice. As author and professor Barry Jones says, "I'm convinced that one of the most important spiritual disciplines for us to recover in the kind of world in which we live is the discipline of table fellowship. In the fast-paced, tech-saturated, attention-deficit-disordered culture in which we find ourselves, Christians need to recover the art of a slow meal around a table with people we care about."<sup>1</sup>

As we saw last week, the Bible frequently shows God setting a table for his people. It's a symbol of his provision, presence, and offer of peace. It's also a symbol of our deep need to make connections and form bonds with one another. As a church, our new vision is to reduce loneliness, anxiety, and addiction by having meaningful conversations where people experience Christ through us.

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<sup>1</sup> Barry Jones, "The Dinner Table as a Place of Connection, Brokenness, and Blessing," *DTS Magazine*, October 26, 2015, <https://voice.dts.edu/article/a-place-at-the-table-jones-barry/>

This week we're going to focus on Jesus' last supper with his disciples as told by John. We'll see how our Savior used the intimate setting of a family meal to teach his disciples how they should understand his death and reassure them in his coming absence. As New Testament scholar N.T. Wright puts it, "When Jesus himself wanted to explain to his disciples what his forthcoming death was all about, he didn't give them a theory, he gave them a meal."<sup>2</sup>

## Day 1

Jesus enters Jerusalem for the last time knowing that the cross awaits him. God ordained the time of his sacrifice to coincide with the Jewish feast of Passover. Passover commemorated God's rescue of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt, when death passed over all of those who painted their doorframes with the blood of the lamb.

In the scene we will read from in John's Gospel, Jesus, the ultimate Passover lamb, reclines at a table with his disciples hours before his arrest. Notice how Jesus interacts with them. For years these people had been his students, traveling companions, and friends. They trusted Jesus enough to leave their homes and families to follow him. They believed he was the Messiah, the Savior and King they'd been waiting for. But they didn't understand everything. At this meal, Jesus lovingly helps them prepare for what is to come. John invites us to observe this intimate scene — to hear their conversation and witness Jesus' love for his followers.

We'll read through most of John 13–15 today, and then focus on smaller sections for the rest of the week. Imagine what it would have been like to be one of the disciples at the table. What would you have been thinking and feeling? What stands out to you as you read through these verses?

## Read

### John 13–15:17

**13** *It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.*

<sup>2</sup> *The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. <sup>3</sup> Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; <sup>4</sup> so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. <sup>5</sup> After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*

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<sup>2</sup> N.T. Wright, Quoted in Jones

<sup>6</sup> He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”

<sup>7</sup> Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.”

<sup>8</sup> “No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.”

Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.”

<sup>9</sup> “Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!”

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered, “Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.” <sup>11</sup> For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

<sup>12</sup> When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. <sup>13</sup> “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup> Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. <sup>15</sup> I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. <sup>16</sup> Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup> Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

<sup>18</sup> “I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill this passage of Scripture: ‘He who shared my bread has turned against me.’

<sup>19</sup> “I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am. <sup>20</sup> Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me.”

<sup>21</sup> After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.”

<sup>22</sup> His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant.

<sup>23</sup> One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him.

<sup>24</sup> Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, “Ask him which one he means.”

<sup>25</sup> Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?”

<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. <sup>27</sup> As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

So Jesus told him, "What you are about to do, do quickly."<sup>28</sup> But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him.<sup>29</sup> Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor.<sup>30</sup> As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.

<sup>31</sup> When he was gone, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. <sup>32</sup> If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

<sup>33</sup> "My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. <sup>34</sup> "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

<sup>36</sup> Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?"

Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later."

<sup>37</sup> Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."

<sup>38</sup> Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!

**14** "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. <sup>2</sup> My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. <sup>4</sup> You know the way to the place where I am going."

<sup>5</sup> Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

<sup>6</sup> Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup> If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

<sup>8</sup> Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

<sup>9</sup> Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? <sup>10</sup> Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. <sup>11</sup> Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe

on the evidence of the works themselves. <sup>12</sup> Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup> And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

<sup>15</sup> “If you love me, keep my commands. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—<sup>17</sup> the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. <sup>18</sup> I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. <sup>19</sup> Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup> On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. <sup>21</sup> Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

<sup>22</sup> Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?”

<sup>23</sup> Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. <sup>24</sup> Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

<sup>25</sup> “All this I have spoken while still with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. <sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

<sup>28</sup> “You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. <sup>29</sup> I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. <sup>30</sup> I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me, <sup>31</sup> but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me. “Come now; let us leave.

**15** “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup> He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. <sup>3</sup> You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

<sup>5</sup> “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> If you do not remain in

*me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

*<sup>9</sup> "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup> I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup> My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command. <sup>15</sup> I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. <sup>17</sup> This is my command: Love each other.*

- How does Jesus tell the disciples to relate to each other? How does he demonstrate what that means?
- What will Jesus' death do for his disciples? Who does Jesus promise will come when he's gone?

## Reflect

On the night before he was crucified, Jesus sat around a table with his closest followers. With a heavy heart, he imparts wisdom and offers encouragement. Even as his disciples fail to fully grasp the life-altering events that await them in the next 72 hours, Jesus tenderly reassures them, while challenging them to greater faith and obedience. With a promise of victory on the other side of the cross, Jesus gives his disciples love, comfort and hope. It was a meal none of them forgot.

In our own relationships, we can imitate Jesus in his desire to serve and encourage those around us. This week, as we think about gathering around tables with those closest to us, let's consider how we can offer them love, comfort, and hope.

## Respond

Who are some of the people in your life that you'd like to offer Jesus' love, comfort, and hope? Who would you like to offer that to you? Pray for them right now.

# Day 2

One of my children (who shall remain nameless) loves to sign my birthday and Mother's Day cards, "Your FAVORITE child." It's an obvious attempt to provoke the siblings, and it's all in good fun, but there is something revealing in the sentiment. We all want to feel special and loved for who we are, but we can also want to be first, to be the favored one, to be considered the best. This was certainly true of the disciples who frequently argued over who would be in positions of honor in Jesus' kingdom. The Gospels record more than one of their debates over who would be Jesus' right-hand man. The disciples didn't yet understand how radically different Jesus' reign would be, but they were going to find out.

In the scene we're going to witness today, Jesus meets the disciples' need to be loved and valued, while subverting their idea of what honor and privilege among his followers looks like.

## Read

### John 13:1–15 (NIV)

***13** It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.*

*<sup>2</sup> The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. <sup>3</sup> Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; <sup>4</sup> so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. <sup>5</sup> After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*

*<sup>6</sup> He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"*

*<sup>7</sup> Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."*

*<sup>8</sup> "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."*

*Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."*

*<sup>9</sup> "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"*

*<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." <sup>11</sup> For*

*he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.*

*<sup>12</sup> When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. <sup>13</sup> “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup> Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. <sup>15</sup> I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.*

- Why are Jesus’ actions so shocking in this scene? What example is he setting?

## Reflect

Although Jesus and his disciples undoubtedly had many meals together, this one is significant because it is not only the last one they will have, but also because they are gathered to celebrate the Passover. Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of the Passover feast. He is the sacrificial Lamb who would willingly lay down his life to take away the sins of the world. Jesus came to serve, not to be served (Matthew 20:28).

I love how verse one helps us understand Jesus’ motivation for this whole encounter — love. *“Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.”* He loved his disciples with a self-giving, sacrificial love that would ultimately empower them and give them hope to endure his departure. He demonstrated this love in an act that would have been truly shocking to anyone living in the first century. He washed his disciples feet.

Walking dusty roads well traveled by humans and livestock made for some dirty feet. It was common for a host to provide water to wash a guest’s feet, but a slave would do the actual washing. Yet, the Messiah, the incarnate Son of God, the ultimate Savior and King bends down before his followers and gently cleans their dirt covered feet. It would be an astounding act of humility today. In the status-obsessed Roman culture of the first century, it was downright scandalous. It provides us with a beautiful picture of who Jesus is and how he calls us to relate to each other.

John makes it clear that Jesus was not only washing the feet of his friends, but his enemy. Judas had already decided to betray Jesus, yet Jesus serves him in the same way he serves all the others. This is the way God treats those who betray him. Those who spurn his love and reject his provision. The ones who turn their backs on Jesus to run after the things of this world. A reckoning will ultimately come and sin will be judged, but before that, he offers his unconditional love and mercy.

In Philippians 2:5–8, Paul helps us put this scene in its cosmic context and echoes the very message that Jesus is sending:

*<sup>5</sup> In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:*



<sup>6</sup> *Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own  
advantage;  
<sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing  
by taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.  
<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
by becoming obedient to death—  
even death on a cross!*

Paul says, “*Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.*” Jesus says, “*Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.*”

When we gather around tables with one another, let’s remember Jesus’ act of humility and service. Let’s lay aside our pride, our feelings of entitlement, and our insistence on being in the privileged position. Let’s listen, serve, and be willing to give of ourselves in sacrificial love. Let’s help people feel valued, and point them to Jesus as the ultimate love-giver.

- What are some modern equivalents to foot-washing? How can we show honor to others?
- What are some ways you can serve those closest to you? Your friends and family?
- How can you show love to people who oppose you? Misunderstand you? Even betray you?

## Respond

As you spend time in prayer today, praise Jesus for his humble, sacrificial service to you. Thank him for his willingness to go to the cross to save you. Invite the Spirit to convict you for any pride or entitlement that you routinely show to those around you. Ask him how to humbly serve others.

## Day 3

Ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, people have had reasons to fear being vulnerable. One of the first realizations the couple experienced after the fall was that they were naked. They were exposed and open to attacks both physical and emotional. They and all their descendants could no longer assume that they would be welcomed in peace and accepted in love by those they encountered.

Ever since the fall, we’ve felt the need to protect ourselves, not just from physical danger, but from those who would hurt us relationally. Some of us have developed a thick, turtle-like shell to draw ourselves into when we feel exposed. Maybe because we’ve been hurt in the past, we’re suspicious, wary, and quick to withdraw. We don’t want to risk being soft or vulnerable.

But here's the problem with living like a turtle — you can't love other people from inside your shell. Only the most superficial relationships are without risk. Real, genuine love requires vulnerability. Consider the vulnerability that Jesus shows during his last supper with his disciples.

## Read

### John 13:21–30 (NIV)

*<sup>21</sup> After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.”*

*<sup>22</sup> His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant.*

*<sup>23</sup> One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him.*

*<sup>24</sup> Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, “Ask him which one he means.”*

*<sup>25</sup> Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?”*

*<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. <sup>27</sup> As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.*

*So Jesus told him, “What you are about to do, do quickly.” <sup>28</sup> But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. <sup>29</sup> Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor. <sup>30</sup> As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.*

- How does Jesus' relationship with his disciples provide a model for us?

## Reflect

Perhaps because we know that he's the divine Son of God, we can forget that Jesus experienced the same human emotions we do, because he was fully human. Though he never sinned, Jesus knew what it was to smile at a cute toddler, laugh at a good joke, or get hurt by a friend's betrayal.

Judas had traveled with Jesus throughout his ministry. He's walked the same roads, sat around the same tables, slept on the same ground as his teacher. He watched Jesus heal the sick and the injured, welcome the marginalized into his company, and heard him proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God. Yet, Judas listened to the whispered suggestions of the devil. We can imagine all kinds of ways Judas justified his betrayal, but ultimately he sold out his Savior for thirty pieces of silver and sealed the act with a kiss. Jesus knew this. He knew what Judas was going to do, and it hurt.

Beyond Judas' betrayal, Jesus knew that Peter would deny him. He knew that the other disciples were going to abandon him. Yet here he sat, gathered around a table with his friends. John was so close that he could lean up against Jesus. He loved these people more than he feared the pain they might inflict upon him. He loves us the same.

To love is to risk. There is no way around it. But it's worth it, because it's only through making ourselves vulnerable that we can forge the deep bonds with others that we desperately need. True human connection is key to human flourishing.

Of course, there are boundaries that shouldn't be crossed. Some people are so broken that we need to pray for them to experience God's healing before we truly open ourselves up to them. We can still love them without exposing ourselves to the kind of damage that they bring. Those kinds of relationships take both compassion and wisdom to navigate.

But too many of us are so afraid of vulnerability that we keep the majority of people at a distance. We're lonely, anxious, and even addicted to things that we think will help us block the pain. We've made a comfortable home inside our shell, even if our souls are shriveling. It's time for us to come out into the light and try.

If this doesn't describe you, then know that the turtles in your life need you. By having meaningful conversations with them, you can invite them out of their shells. You can show them the unconditional love of Jesus. He's the one who can heal the broken places and bring them to a place of peace, hope, and joy.

- Evaluate your own relationships. Do you have close relationships beyond your immediate family? How comfortable are you with being transparent with other Christians in a small group? How could putting yourself out there more help?
- The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a lot of us to feel more isolated and alone. Just because we've been asked to physically distance, doesn't mean we have to emotionally distance ourselves. Who do you need to reach out to or check in with?

## Respond

Praise God for the incarnation! Jesus knows all of your hurts and fears. Take all those feelings to him in prayer. Praise him for your brothers and sisters in Christ and ask him to forge tighter bonds between you and others in his body. Ask him for wisdom in how you can reach out to others who may be feeling isolated and alone. How can you share the love of Jesus?

## Day 4

When we dropped my daughter off for her first year of college, I was full of "last words" that wanted to pop out. Suddenly the eighteen-plus years I'd spent with her didn't seem like enough preparation. I wanted to remind her of everything — from small, day-to-day things to big, life-guiding principles. Even though I was only a phone call away, leaving her in that dorm room felt like a "last words" kind of moment.

I didn't let many of those words out. Overwhelming her with instructions and advice on my way out the door didn't seem wise. So I kept it short and sweet. I told her that I loved her, her dad and I were always around when she needed us, and most importantly that God loved her and was always with her. I took the advice a pastor gave my dad when I was a teenager, "Talk to God about your child more than you talk to your child about your child." In other words, I prayed.

On the night he was arrested, Jesus spent time with his closest disciples. He knew his death would be traumatic for them and that the time between his death and resurrection would feel like an eternity. He also knew that even after the resurrection he would not be with them in the same way. Jesus had last words he needed to say, but he couldn't prepare them for everything. And he didn't have to. The Father was going to send them someone else to give his followers help, guidance, and comfort.

## Read

### John 14:15–27 (NIV)

*<sup>15</sup> "If you love me, keep my commands. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—<sup>17</sup> the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. <sup>18</sup> I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. <sup>19</sup> Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup> On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. <sup>21</sup> Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."*

*<sup>22</sup> Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?"*

*<sup>23</sup> Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. <sup>24</sup> Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me."*

*<sup>25</sup> "All this I have spoken while still with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. <sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."*

- Who would the Father be sending and what would he do?

## Reflect

The Holy Spirit is not a supernatural ability given to Christ's followers to be used however they wish, nor is he a genie to command. He is the Spirit of God and the third person of the Trinity who enables Christ's followers to live out the will of God.

It is the Greek word *paraklētos* that Jesus uses here to describe the one the Father is sending, the Holy Spirit. This term is translated "Advocate" in the NIV, but also appears as Helper, Counselor, and Comforter in other translations. The reason for the variety is that none of those words seems to capture all Jesus wishes to communicate about the coming Spirit.<sup>3</sup> For this reason some commentators prefer to use the transliteration "*Paraclete*" because no English word encapsulates Jesus' entire meaning.<sup>4</sup>

The Spirit is the Comforter who gives all of Christ's followers strength and encouragement to move forward in trust and obedience. He is the Helper who is a constant source of wisdom, power, and guidance as we follow Christ. He's the Advocate who represents the accused. The Spirit is the faithful, constant, reliable presence of Jesus who empowers his followers every step of the way. Jesus is clear that the Spirit will live *with* and *in* his disciples. The Father and the Son will make their home with those who love and follow Jesus. Christ is promising a mind-blowing union of human and divine. The Holy Spirit is indispensable to all Christ's followers, then and now, as they seek to live as Christ lived and accept his call to take the gospel into the world.

Christ Fellowship has laid out a truly audacious vision: our vision is to reduce loneliness, anxiety, and addiction by having meaningful conversations where people experience Christ through us. This is not a vision we can accomplish through human will, even using the most innovative strategies or time-tested tools. This is a vision that will only come to fruition by the power of the Holy Spirit. Which means each of us needs to yield to his influence in our lives, pray for his strength and wisdom, and step out in faith because he is with us and in us.

Some of Jesus' most important last words were to promise the *Paraclete*. As his followers, we can experience him now. How will you rely on him today and trust him for the future?

- What do you think of Christ Fellowship's new vision? What excites you about it? What scares you? How will dependence on the Holy Spirit be the key?

## Respond

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3 Colin G. Kruse, *John: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 4, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 300.

4 Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12–21*, vol. 25B, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 123.

As part of our vision, we're asking people to commit to engage specific people in a series of meaningful conversations this fall. In your prayer time today, pray over some names that come to mind. Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance.

## Day 5

Happy Friday! It's an exciting time to be a part of Christ Fellowship. Reflect on Jesus' last supper as you consider how you'll participate in CF's new vision.

### Reflect

Read through John 13–15 once more. What can we learn from Christ's relationship with his disciples? How is Jesus a model for us in our relationships, especially as we seek to reach out and have meaningful conversations with those in our community?

### Connect

*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. (John 13:34–35)*

*My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. (John 15:12–13)*

At his last supper with his disciples, Jesus tells them to love one another. He felt so strongly about this command, that he gave it to them twice. The bond we share with our fellow believers is special. We are part of God's family — brothers and sisters in Christ, knit together in love and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

How seriously are we taking this command? Are we known in our communities as Christ's disciples because of our love for one another? As a church family, are we displaying the life-changing, heart-healing, behavior-altering love of Christ for the world to see? Could we commit to gathering around tables and engaging in meaningful conversations with each other and building greater love and trust?

We can share love around a table. I know that it's hard to think about gathering together during a pandemic. But for those who are able, let's find ways to connect with at least one other person and encourage them with Jesus' love this week.

### Respond

In your prayer time today, reflect on the example Jesus sets for us during the Last Supper. Praise him for his immense love and sacrifice. Thank the Father for the gift of the Spirit. How can you yield more and more to the Spirit's influence in your daily life?

How can you increase your love for other believers? How can you show them that love? Who are some people you can engage in meaningful conversation this week?