

Session 3: John 14:1–15:17

SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

Main Idea

As we abide with Christ, the Holy Spirit empowers, comforts, and reveals truth to us so that we can live faithfully.

Head Change

To know that when we abide with Jesus, the Holy Spirit illuminates Scripture so we can know God and his will.

Heart Change

To feel motivated to abide with Christ consistently so that we will become more and more like him.

Life Change

To prioritize time in God's Word, absorb more of Christ and his character, and seek opportunities to reflect him in our personal spheres of influence.

OPEN

How strong do you like your tea or coffee? What's your secret to making the perfect cup?

The strength of your morning brew depends upon how long you let the tea leaves or coffee grounds sit in the water. The longer they steep, the darker the water becomes, and the more flavorful your drink tastes. Similarly, the “flavor” of our spiritual fruit depends upon how well we abide in, or hang out with, Christ. The longer we infuse ourselves with God's Word, the more deeply we'll know and the better we'll resemble Christ.

READ

John 14:1–15:27. If you are pressed for time, you can shorten your reading to John 14:1–17; 15:1–17.

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Dr. Tony Evans's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

What's the most direct way to know the Father?

Which members of the Trinity are involved in our Christian life?

How can we impact the spiritual growth of others?

Show Session 3: *John 14:1–15:27* (11 minutes).

DISCUSS

In John 13, Jesus announced his departure to the disciples. Despite saying he was going somewhere the disciples could not follow, Jesus had many hopeful things to say to them. Jesus told the disciples that he would soon leave them, and they would carry on his work even further. He's turning their attention away from their sorrow toward a brighter future. **In what ways is sorrow or grief debilitating? How does a reminder of hope give you strength in your pain?**

Read John 14:1–14.

Jesus comforts his disciples promising to prepare a place where they could all reunite. His departure was not abandonment, but a reason to hope in a heavenly future. **In what ways can the hope of eternity with Jesus help us weather the storms of today?**

In 14:6, Jesus makes a bold statement: “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Many people struggle to accept the exclusivity of Jesus, wanting a variety of ways to God. Jesus cannot be ignored or sidestepped as we seek God. He is the only way to God. **What does it look like for you to make Jesus your priority in everyday life?**

How can we, as Jesus’s disciples, point people to his way and truth in word and action?

Dr. Evans said, in Jesus, “God took a selfie.” Sometimes we think of the Father of the Old Testament as very different from Jesus in the Gospels. But Jesus says they are one. When you look at Jesus, you see the Father. When Jesus speaks, he speaks the words of the Father. When we respond to Jesus, we are responding to God the Father. He is the manifestation of the Godhead in human flesh. **How do you typically think of the Father? Do you imagine him to be different from Jesus? How so?**

In verse 11, Jesus points to his miracles as evidence of his divine nature. His actions back up his claim to be God. **What can Jesus’s life and actions teach you about who God is?**

Read John 14:15–26.

Note: To learn more about praying “in Jesus’s name,” go to **Go Deeper Section 1** at the end of this study.

In verses 15 and 23–24, Jesus directly connects obedience with love. True affections are followed by actions. While many may think that love is a license to live how we please, Jesus sees obedience as an obligation of love. None of us obeys God perfectly, but love without action is not love, much less the kind of worship that honors God. **Do you think of love and obedience as necessarily connected? Why, or why not?**

What do you think a healthy relationship between love and obedience looks like?

Jesus announces the coming of the Holy Spirit, whom he calls the Advocate, Counselor, or Helper, depending on the Biblical translation you are using. Jesus says in verse 17, “He is the Spirit of truth.” **How will the disciples know the Spirit? What will he do for the disciples?**

Note: To learn more about the Trinity, go to **Go Deeper Section 2** at the end of this study.

One of the Spirit’s primary tasks is to illuminate Jesus’s teaching so that we can understand and apply it to our lives. **In what way can studying and applying the Bible be difficult for you? What would it look like to actively seek the Holy Spirit’s help as you study God’s Word?**

Read John 14:27–31. Jesus hints that difficult events are about to happen, but he offers his disciples his peace. God’s peace is not like the world’s peace—it sees beyond our immediate circumstances and trusts in God’s capable oversight of all things. Even when our lives are in chaos, we can trust God and look forward to his better future. **How would you define “peace”? What practices could help you redirect your thoughts and feelings toward Jesus when you are afraid or worried?**

Note: To learn more about the peace of God, go to **Go Deeper Section 3** at the end of this study.

Read John 15:1–16.

The chapter opens with another vivid metaphor: “I am the true vine,” says Jesus (15:1). Though he is leaving, Jesus is not going to be disconnected from his followers. Every disciple of Christ is a “branch” (v. 2) of the vine, extending

his influence across the world. **How does the image of a vine affect your understanding of your relationship to Jesus?**

Dr. Evans told us that Jesus expects his disciples to bear increasingly more fruit, and to remain fruitful throughout their lives. Fruit always reflects the character of the tree, so the closer we are to Christ, the more we will act, think, and look like him. **How well do your behavior and thought life reflect Christ's character?**

Note: *To learn more about the fruit of the Spirit, go to **Go Deeper Section 4** at the end of this study.*

Dr. Evans illustrated the idea of abiding with a tea bag. When tea is immersed in hot water, it imparts its strong flavor to the water. But if a tea bag is only dipped into the water, it will not impart much flavor to the water at all. Our spiritual maturity reflects the amount of quality time we spend with Jesus in God's Word and prayer. **Are you an "immerser" or a "dipper"? What does your habit of abiding, or spending time with God?**

The more we spend time with God, willing to be taught by his Spirit, the more we will bear fruit that looks like Jesus. We must not let the world distract us from abiding with him. **What plan do you have in place to prioritize time with God? What can you do to encourage regular times of prayer and devotion?**

LAST WORD

Jesus wasn't going to abandon his friends. He promised to send the Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, who would strengthen and teach the disciples how to follow Jesus one day at a time. But the Holy Spirit is not just a promise to the twelve disciples—he is available to everyone who follows Jesus.

The more we abide with Christ, immersing ourselves in him through prayer and study of his Word, the more we'll look like him. Let's commit to abiding with Jesus, to knowing the Father, and listening to the Spirit. The more time we spend with God, the deeper we will know him and bear fruit for his kingdom.

GO DEEPER

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material. We've highlighted a place where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide.

But you can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting and deepen your study of the Gospel of John.

1. Praying in Jesus's Name

We often end our prayers by saying, "In Jesus's name." On one hand, we treat this phrase as somewhat meaningless, a ritual closing to our prayers. On the other hand, some believe that the phrase itself holds the power to gain God's special attention and blessing. It's as if God may not answer our prayers without that phrase. Both extremes miss the mark. Praying in Jesus's name is powerful and essential, but it is not a secret key to gaining blessings.

So what did Jesus mean when he said he would do whatever we ask in his name?

To lend someone your name is to extend your approval—their words and actions align with your wishes and values. To pray in Jesus's name means that our prayers align with Christ's will. In the context of John 14–15, we are far more likely to pray in alignment with Christ when we've been abiding with him, conforming more and more to his image.

What do you think it means to pray in a way that does not align with God's character? When you pray, how confident are you that your requests mirror his will?

Prayers in Jesus's name also carry his authority. In John 10:25, Jesus said, "The works I do in my Father's name testify about me . . ." Jesus's actions mirrored the Father's will, character, and were done by the Father's power. In other words, Jesus worked on the Father's behalf. He had his Father's authority. So, too, as we pray in Jesus's name, he answers our prayers with his Father's power and authority. In prayer, we are completely reliant on him.

What circumstances do you need God to step into with all of his power and authority?

What changes can you make in your prayer life to pray according to Jesus's will, character, power, and authority?

2. Understanding the Trinity

The Trinity is a core doctrine of the Christian faith. We believe in one God who exists eternally as three persons, the Father, Son, and Spirit. Each person is fully God, yet there is one God. If the Trinity sounds confusing, you are in good company. God's nature is ultimately a mystery to us all. But some guidelines can help us wrap our minds around our three-in-one God.

When we talk about the Trinity, it can be tricky to accurately describe the way the three persons of the Godhead relate to one another. The acronym DUE can give us some helpful guidelines:

D: Distinction—The three persons of the Godhead are unique. The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father. Each has their own unique role.

U: Unity—There is one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:6). While all three persons of the Trinity are unique, they share the same essence. The Trinity is God.

E: Equality—All three Persons are fully divine. The Father is God (John 6:27). Jesus is God (John 20:28). The Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3–4). No person of the Trinity is superior or inferior to the others.

These guidelines can be helpful in describing the Trinity, but God's nature is difficult to grasp. We struggle to understand God, and we are also limited. He is not an idol we can draw or sculpt an image of. His mind is, by definition, beyond our reckoning. How could we truly ever explain a holy God in a simple way? But while we cannot fully explain God, but we can still praise and honor him because of what he has chosen to reveal about himself.

What does it look like to trust God even when we don't fully understand him?

How can knowing God as Trinity deepen your worship

3. The Peace of God

One of God's primary characteristics is peace: he is Yahweh Shalom, "the Lord is Peace" (Judges 6:24), Isaiah 9:6 calls the savior (Jesus) the Prince of Peace, and Galatians 5:22 tells us that one of the fruits of the Spirit is peace. God truly is all about peace.

The Hebrew word for peace, shalom, has connotations of health, prosperity, welfare, and wholeness. It means much more than merely an absence of conflict. **How would you describe a relationship that enjoys shalom, the fullness of true peace? What makes that kind of friendship desirable?**

In our world full of conflict, shalom can feel far off, if not impossible to experience. So, how can we experience the peace of God? First, we must experience peace with God by being reconciled to him through Jesus our Lord and savior. Read Romans 5:1–2.

When we've accepted the gift of grace, we can rest securely, knowing that our sins are forgiven and we are at peace with God. **What do you think it means to be at peace with God? How does a right relationship with him change the way we live?**

Second, the peace of Christ is a gift available to us during difficult times. Read Philippians 4:6–7.

When we are tempted to worry over things that are beyond our control, God wants us to turn to him in trust. He wants us to pray about our fears and hopes and, because he is all-powerful and trustworthy, wants our hearts and minds to rest. He is in control, wants the best for us, and will not abandon us. In Christ, you do not have to be afraid of what might happen tomorrow. **When you feel out of control, what is your instinctual reaction? Where do you turn? At what point do you turn to God for help?**

What can you do to remind yourself that God is in control? To turn to him first when you feel anxious?

Finally, we are called to be instruments of God's peace for the people around us. Jesus taught, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9). When we prize peace enough to work at it,

to spend time and effort to reconcile broken relationships, we show the world we are his children and resemble our Father in heaven. **Who comes to your mind when you think of a peacemaker? What steps can you take to proactively seek peace rather than merely not engaging in conflict?**

Peace is integral to God's nature, and he wants us to experience his peace. Have you trusted him for your salvation? Are you turning to him in your daily circumstances and seeking his strength and wisdom? The world needs his peace, and as you rely on him, you can show the world the peace-filled wonder of life with God.

4. Fruit of the Spirit

You can easily identify a plant by its fruit. When we see peaches on a tree or blueberries on a bush, we naturally conclude that we're looking at a peach tree or a blueberry bush. In the same way, you can determine what someone believes or values based on their actions.

Read Galatians 5:16–25.

Paul begins by encouraging believers to “walk” or act according to the Spirit. In doing so, we will fight our natural inclinations, which he calls “desires of the flesh.” Even though we have been redeemed by Jesus, our desires will continue to bump up against the will of the Spirit for the rest of our lives. **In what ways have you experienced the struggle between your self-centered inclinations and godly behavior?**

Look back over the list of behaviors in Galatians 5:19–21. The works of the flesh are, sadly, very common, even among believers. We've all been guilty of some of them. But the Spirit offers us a better way. **When you fall into one of the fleshly behaviors listed, what usually helps you rise out of them? What could you do to remove or deny those behaviors in your daily life?**

When a person trusts Christ and yields to his lordship, the Spirit of God indwells him or her. But, while the Spirit's presence is constant, believers must choose to submit to his leading. The more we follow the Spirit, the more evident Christ's influence in our lives will be. That is why godly behaviors are called the fruit of the Spirit.

When we are led by the Spirit, we love others more wholly. We experience and express joy and peace. We are empowered to be patient, kind, good, and gentle. We become more self-controlled. All these behaviors require us to put others first and practice self-denial in glad submission to Christ. Bearing the fruit of the Spirit requires effort. **In what circumstances have you noticed your life resembling Christ more often? Which fruit of the Spirit do you need to make an effort to cultivate in your life?**

None of the spiritual “fruit” comes naturally to us! Rather, we need the Spirit’s power and leading to direct us in his ways instead of our own. But, as you cultivate these godly behaviors, remember that they do not earn us “brownie points” with God. The fruit of the Spirit are a result of abiding with God, who already has fully forgiven and fully accepted you.

Read John 15:1–5.

Jesus compares himself to a vine and his followers as the branches. We get our nutrients and life from the vine and cannot produce fruit apart from it. Take a moment to pray and consider how you might abide with God more. Ask him to develop his fruit in you so that you might resemble him more and become a greater blessing to those around you. **What does your practice of abiding in Jesus look like? How could you spend more time with him?**