

**International Sunday School Lesson**  
**Study Notes**  
**March 8, 2015**

**Lesson Text: John 14:15-26**  
**Lesson Title: The Promise of a Comforter**

**Introduction**

As the fourteenth chapter of John opens, Jesus is gathered in the upper room with His disciples (John 13-17). In a very short time the entire world of Jesus' disciples was going to collapse around them. Their beloved Master and Lord who they had been with for the past three years was about to leave them. His death on the cross would forever change their lives. They needed His words of comfort and reassurance.

Jesus anticipated the sorrow of the disciples breaking hearts and says to them, "*Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me*" (John 14:1). Jesus was actually saying, "You believe in God, even though you can't see Him. Keep believing in me when you no longer see me." But how could the disciples keep believing when Jesus was gone? The disciples obviously thought that without Christ they would be reduced to nothing and their lives and ministries would come to an end. How wrong they were. Jesus promised them that they would do "*greater works*" than He had done (John 14:12). Their works would not be greater in power, but in scope. He also promised them that "*whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do*" (John 14:13). Praying in Jesus' name is praying as if our Lord was doing the asking. Power to do great works and the privilege of prayer must have been encouraging promises. But there was more.

Jesus' promises to His disciples are connected to the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit. He would come to be their Comforter, Teacher, and Helper. Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit three times before He left the Upper Room (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). In fact, other than the Epistle of Galatians, there is more teaching on the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel than any other book in the New Testament. Our lesson text reveals to us a part of the glorious teaching on the Holy Spirit as our Comforter.

**The Preparation for the Comforter (John 14:15)**

Verse 15

"If ye love me, keep my commandments."

The commandment, "If ye love me, keep my commandments," may seem totally out of place in connection with the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Actually, the promise of the coming Spirit has its roots in an already existing love and obedience between Jesus and His disciples. If the distress and fear of the prediction of Jesus departure was real, it meant that His disciples truly loved Him. Had they not loved Him, His departure would not have troubled their hearts. If they really loved Him, they must show that love by obedience to Him, even after His departure.

“If ye love me” should be read in a confiding rather than a doubtful tone. Jesus is not questioning their love but rather affirming their love. Jesus is saying, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” Obeying Christ’s commandments is the one sure way of proving love to the Father. Everything that the coming Comforter will provide for the disciples is based on their love and obedience to Jesus Christ.

What are Christ’s “commandments?” While the Ten Commandments must be included in this thought, Christ’s “commandments” goes much farther. The “commandments” of Christ include whatever Christ requires of us. It is the entire revelation of His will in the word of God. Every child of Christ who loves Him obeys Him. Christians do not live a pick and choose life. And the Holy Spirit can only be to the child of God what He is sent to be when love and obedience characterize our lives.

### **The Promise of the Comforter (John 14:16)**

#### Verse 16

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;”

This verse begins with “And” which tells us there is a connection between the previous verse and this verse. In verse 15, Jesus has been speaking about the disciples love for Him, evidenced by an obedient walk. Now, He speaks of His love for them, evidenced by asking “the Father” to “give” them “another Comforter.”

“And I will pray the Father” means the Holy Spirit comes from God the Father at the request of Jesus Christ. Once again we are brought face to face with the doctrine of the Trinity. “I” is Jesus. “Father” is Jehovah God. “Comforter” is the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. We accept this doctrine by faith because it is taught in the Scriptures. Although there is no systematic treatment of this doctrine, there are numerous passages that give us basis for believing it. And frankly, what would life be for the child of God without the Trinity?

“Comforter” is the Greek word *parakletos*, meaning “one called alongside to help.” It refers more to an “advocate” than a sympathizer. The word “another” is

the Greek *allos*, meaning “another of the same kind.” Jesus is saying, “I am sending you One exactly the same as Me.” He was not sending “another” in the sense of another one, but One with the same compassion, attributes, and One with the same love for them.

“Abide with you for ever” were special words indeed for these troubled disciples. Jesus had been with them for three years. He had helped them, taught them, rescued them from situations and circumstances and walked alongside of them. Now they would have One just like Jesus “for ever.” What a blessed promise this is. “For ever” means “forever!” There are some believers who interpret “for ever” to mean “until you sin.” That’s not what Jesus said. He said, “for ever.” It is impossible to receive the Holy Spirit and then lose the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to be saved and then unsaved. Once the “Comforter” comes He “abides for ever.”

### **The Person of the Comforter (John 14:17-26)**

#### Verse 17

“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

The “Comforter” is called “the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive...” The presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is the difference between unbelievers and believers. The “world cannot receive” the “Spirit of truth,” because people are content with a superficial knowledge of things around them. The “world cannot receive, because it seeth him not.” Jesus is saying the world isn’t going to know the Holy Spirit any more than they knew Him when He was here (John 1:11).

The unsaved have no ability to understand truth and they don’t understand the abiding presence or working power of the Holy Spirit. The religious leaders had watched Jesus for three years and concluded that He was of the devil (Matthew 12:24). If you give a lost man all the facts about Christ, he will come to the wrong conclusion every time.

“But ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” This speaks of fellowship and intimacy. The Holy Spirit would not just be with them as before, now He would be “in” them. After Christ ascends back to the Father the Holy Spirit will introduce a new era. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came and went without ever “dwelling” in a person. Now, the Holy Spirit will “dwell with you, and shall be in you.” The Holy Spirit “in” the believer is a permanent, uninterrupted residence. What a privilege it is that God would place His Holy Spirit in us. Every moment of every day, every mile of the way, He is in us!

## Verse 18

“I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.”

Here is another promise from Jesus to His disciples and to us. He promises that He “will not leave you comfortless.” The Greek word for “comfortless” is *orphanos* {or-fan-os}. In English that is “orphans.” Jesus is presenting a picture of a dying father. When a father died in that culture is left the children in a difficult place. And although Jesus will be dying on the cross in a few hours He promises He will not leave them like orphans, destitute and without hope.

“I will come to you” may be interpreted in three possible ways. One, it may be a promise of Jesus’ appearance to them after His resurrection. Second, it may refer to the coming of Jesus in the person of the Holy Spirit as He is discussing. Third, it may refer to the rapture of the church or the Second Coming of Christ. It seems unlikely that the third possibility is correct since Jesus is not discussing His return. It seems most likely that Jesus is referring to His appearance to them after His resurrection.

## Verse 19

“Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.”

In a few hours and days the “world” would never again see Jesus. But things would be different for the disciples. Jesus says, “But ye see me.” This is a reference to our Lord’s own resurrection appearance to His disciples. And because Jesus “lives,” the disciples “shall live also.” Some commentators have connected these words with the idea of the future resurrection of the body. While that is a glorious truth, it seems more likely that Jesus is assuring the disciples that “because He lives,” they “shall live also.” They will experience spiritual life through His living presence.

## Verse 20

“At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.”

“At that day,” or on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit comes (Acts 2), Jesus’ disciples “shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” It won’t be until the Holy Spirit comes that the disciples will “know” the mystical and wonderful union that exists between Jesus and the Father and Jesus and the believer. The word “know” is *ginosko* {ghin-occe-ko} and means “to be made aware of.”

The promise of the Comforter and the coming of the Holy Spirit is not just about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. It is also about us as believers and how

God miraculously and graciously has placed us in that heavenly union. The words “Ye in me, and I in you” have never occurred in the Old Testament. No Old Testament believer ever said, “Jehovah is in me,” or “I’m in Jehovah.” But that will be possible when the Holy Spirit comes “at that day.”

### Verse 21

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”

This verse is based on the same principle and truth of verse 15. The obedient person demonstrates his love for Jesus Christ. Anyone who loves Jesus is loved of God the Father. That does not mean that God doesn’t love the world as stated in John 3:16. What it does mean is that God loves the individual that loves Christ with a peculiar, special love, different from the general love with which God loves mankind. As a result, Jesus says, “And I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” “Manifest” means “to disclose, declare, and to show.” If you desire a genuine personal relationship with Jesus Christ, not church membership or religious exercise, then obey Christ’s commandments and prove your love to Him. When you do, Christ will “show Himself” to you in all His fullness and grace. The loving and obedient child of God will know comfort, joy, and assurance in a way that professing believers will never know.

### Verse 22

“Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?”

The “Judas,” spoken of here is not the betrayer. Judas Iscariot had already left the upper room by this time (John 13:26-30). This Judas most likely is the brother of James mentioned in Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13. He is also called Thaddaeus (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18). He asks Jesus, “Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” His question was one of revelation. He could not understand how Jesus, if He reappeared to His disciples after being away from them for a little while, could avoid showing Himself to the world. In other words, “Lord, if we will be able to see you, why won’t the world be able to see you?”

### Verse 23

“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”

Jesus' answer to Judas is gracious and compassionate. This verse sounds almost identical to verse 15 and verse 21. Jesus is repeating for the third time in this discourse that love and obedience is essential to a loving relationship with Him and the Father. It was impossible for Jesus to communicate with a world that didn't love Him and obey Him (Luke 6:46). The world hated Jesus. But Jesus' disciples loved Him, therefore, He could reveal Himself to them on the basis of love (Proverbs 8:17).

Jesus' answer to Judas is crucial to our understanding. So many people are living life based on being raised in church, a baptism, a profession of faith they barely remember or a profession of faith that changed absolutely nothing in their life. And the truth is, there has never been one ounce of commitment to Christ, love or obedience. Jesus' answer to Judas is that you can't have a "manifestation," a union with Me unless you love Me.

#### Verse 24

"He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me."

Jesus' final words to Judas was like drawing a line in the sand. In verse 23, Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words..." Here, He says, "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings..." Jesus is asking Judas, "How can I manifest or reveal Myself to someone who doesn't do what I say?" In other words, what good is it for Jesus to reveal Himself to someone who doesn't want Him or doesn't love Him? The reason the world is lost is because the world doesn't want Jesus (Matthew 23:37). That's Jesus answer to Judas.

"And the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me" was repeated to remind the disciples of the perfect unity of the Father and the Son. "Not mine" means what Jesus had been saying was not His own thoughts or opinions. Because the "words" which Jesus spoke were "the Father's" words, He spoke with authority. For the past three years everything Jesus had told His disciples was God's truth. He had been giving them the absolute truth of God. They were not His words, "but the Father's which sent me."

Some people still today claim you can talk to God and know God apart from knowing Jesus Christ. That is impossible! You cannot know God and you cannot come to God apart from Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

#### Verse 25

"These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you."

"These things" probably refer to the things Jesus had taught His disciples in the upper room. It could also include everything He had taught them up to this

point in His public ministry. Either way, there was enough truth in the upper room discourse to bring assurance to their troubled heart if they would trust and believe.

“Being yet present with you” is a tender compassionate phrase. It’s as if Christ is intentionally lingering to be with them because He knows their hearts and want to stay as long as possible.

### Verse 26

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

“But,” means He can’t stay any longer. He must go to the cross and do the Father’s will. He must leave them physically, “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost...” is coming. “Comforter,” the *paraklete*, the “One called alongside to help,” is being sent by “the Father in Jesus name.” The Holy Spirit being sent “in my name” means He is sent in Jesus’ place.

When He the Holy Spirit comes, “he shall teach you all things.” This is one of the many verses which clearly proves the Holy Spirit is a person. A mere influence could not “teach.” This promise and function of the Holy Spirit does not mean that the disciples will know everything about everything. It means the Holy Spirit would make clear to them that which the Lord wanted them to know. Human reason unaided by the Holy Spirit is always inadequate to understand divine truth.

“And bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” is a glorious promise indeed. Several of the disciples present when Jesus said this would experience this promise. Men like Matthew and John, would later write Gospel’s of Jesus life. That would have been impossible had not the Holy Spirit reminded them of details and events of Jesus’ life. In all likelihood there were some records kept of the sayings of Jesus, but the Holy Spirit is the author of the Bible and He is still the One who “brings all things to our remembrance.”

Author William Barclay comments, “This ministry of the Holy Spirit also includes his reminding us of the words of Jesus as we face decisions. When we are tempted to do evil, the Holy Spirit brings to our mind some word of Scripture or some remembrance of the person of our Lord that keeps us pure.” He goes on to say, “In the moment of our testing, the Holy Spirit brings to us the memory of the things we should never forget.”

### **Conclusion**

Almost everything Jesus said in John 13-17, He said from the vantage point that He is about to leave His disciples. And that troubled them deeply. They were afraid. They didn't understand.

Can you imagine being one of the disciples in the upper room hearing all of this, experiencing all of this, and not understanding all that was happening? All the elements for fear and apprehension were there in that room. And then, Jesus said, "I will not leave you comfortless" (John 14:18). What a promise! What a much needed promise! Although they may have felt like orphans, they were not. And neither are we.

The promise of the Comforter guarantees that the Holy Spirit who lives within the believer is just like Jesus. He is One of the same kind. He comes along side us, encourages us, exhorts us, and stays with us. As we love and obey our Lord, may we be thankful for the presence of the Holy Spirit, and may we lean upon Him every day as He teaches us and brings to our remembrance the things we need to be faithful servants.

Amen.