

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 28

CONVERSATION STARTER

Who, or what, do you turn to most often in times of trouble?

THE *PARAKLETOS*: OUR HELPER AND ADVOCATE

In his farewell address to the disciples, Jesus warns them that he has to leave. At the same time, he tells them not to be distressed because another is coming—a helper who will be with them always. The Greek word used to describe this helper is *parakletos*. There are many facets to this word; more than just a helper, the *parakletos* is a comforter and advocate for us.

Picture a courtroom. There's a prosecutor who wants to convict the defendant, there's a judge who is trying to determine guilt or innocence, and then there's the defense who argues on behalf of the defendant. The advocate Jesus talks about is like the defense, which stands between the judge and the defendant. N.T. Wright says, "In that court, his people can rest assured that their case will be heard, that God will constantly be reminded of their plight, because the spirit will plead on their behalf."

Old Testament Prophets like Ezekiel looked forward to the day when God's Spirit would be poured out, bringing "dry bones" back to life and transforming us from the inside out so we could be faithful to God. Later, in the New Testament letters, Paul equates the Spirit to the very presence of God living in each one of us ([Romans 8:11, 26-27](#)). Paul says the Spirit is also what empowers us with gifts, talents, and skills to do the work of ministry ([1 Cor. 12:7-11](#)).

The role and extent the Spirit has in the life of believers today is still a hotly debated issue. Spend a few moments discussing this with your group. How would you describe the role the Holy Spirit has played in your life up to this point?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about the reading from this week? Was there a verse or idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?

2. Why do you think Jesus claims it's better for the disciples to have the Spirit with us than Jesus himself?
3. Do you believe the Spirit is still at work today? If so, to what extent? If not, explain why.
4. How can you be more open this week to the Holy Spirit's guiding presence in your life?
5. Jesus says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." What do you think he means by this? Why do you think we tend to disassociate obeying God from loving God?
6. Read John 14:27 out loud together. How would you describe the peace that Christ brings? How is it different than the peace the world offers us?

WEEKLY PRACTICE

For the next few weeks, we'll follow along with the Lenten Companion Guide as our weekly practice. Each week, we'll encourage you to either give something up or take on something new in hopes of simplifying our lives, standing in solidarity with those who are suffering, and becoming people who love God and love others well.

Week Two: Sacrificial Spending

Where our money goes, so too go our hearts; our financial habits tell us a lot about what we value. This week, as much as you are able, spend as little money as possible. Only pay for essentials—groceries, gas, medical expenses, etc. For example, eat at home instead of going to restaurants, and avoid shopping. At the end of the week, reflect on your experience: What did this exercise reveal about your spending habits? How did living more frugally help you empathize with those who live on the margins?