



# I Will Not Leave You as Orphans

How the Holy Spirit Helps Believers  
Keep Christ's Commands

John 14:15-26

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# Epigraph

*God sends the Indwelling Spirit for the empowerment, revelation, and illumination needed to live for Christ. – Hanley Liu*

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# Introduction

This is my first sermon of the new school year. I remember what it was like to start a new school year. There was anticipation, but as a Christian, I actually felt very alone. I'm not going to lie. Being a Christian in the world was hard. And after coming back from retreats and spending an entire summer with my church friends, I was left with this deep longing for fellowship, for community, and for more of God's presence and power in my life. That feeling doesn't go away as you get older. Whether it's at school or at work, we're all living in the world. Didn't God promise that he would never leave or forsake us?

## Context

Our passage presents some help for us today. These are the leading moments before Jesus' betrayal. He is speaking to his disciples, and they are distraught. They are worried that Jesus will leave them alone in the world.

## Declarations

To calm their concerns, Jesus gives three definitive declarations. They are sweeping statements about the gift of the Holy Spirit. They are staggering. My goal is to help you see these breathtaking claims, and how they apply to us today. We have the same question as the disciples: How will believers obey when Christ is away?



# 1. Promise (15-17)

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another **Helper**, to be with you forever, (John 14:15-16)

The first declaration is a promise. Jesus frames his promise with love and keeping commandments. This is not a new concept to the disciples. They know that God has always required this of his people. That they would listen and obey the Lord. And Jesus demands this for his followers as well, preparing them for when he leaves. What does it mean to keep Christ’s commandments? It means to keep watch, guard, obey, observe. This is easier said than done. Back in John 13, Jesus had a new commandment for his disciples: They were to love one another just as Jesus did, with a humble, sacrificial attitude. And following in Christ’s footsteps, they were even to love their enemies. Jesus knows this is impossible without his help. We must remember that the disciples were still sinners. They were unfaithful, deserting and denying Jesus when he was arrested. What Jesus does is that he promises a Helper to be with us forever. Someone who will help us keep Christ’s commandments. This concept of the Helper is further explained later in John:

“But when the **Helper** comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will **bear witness** about me. (John 15:26)

What the Spirit does is that he helps bear witness about Jesus. He testifies, commends, speaks well of, and vouches for Christ. He comes alongside to advocate for Jesus. He’s called in to comfort and encourage. We are promised a helper who will always tell us about Christ. We see more back in John 14:

even the **Spirit of truth**, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. (John 14:17)

This Helper is the Spirit of truth, meaning the totality and ultimate reality of God. The Spirit of truth is again mentioned in John 16:

When the **Spirit of truth** comes, he will **guide** you into all the truth, for he will not **speak** on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will **declare** to you the things that are to come. (John 16:13)

The Spirit of truth will guide these disciples into all the truth. Remember, at this point in time, Jesus did not yet die on the cross and resurrect. The full picture of God’s plan for salvation and his subsequent kingdom inauguration

had not yet been fully realized. There was still a lot for the disciples to see. And there were books of the Bible to be written. For the disciples, this was a direct promise in relation to writing the truth of God's Word. The Spirit of truth would speak into Scripture. It will come from the authority of God as only God can declare the things that are to come.

And this Spirit of truth would guide their actions and dictate the course of their life, as they would demonstrate their love for Jesus and his truth by witnessing to the world, evangelizing and dying as martyrs with hearts that truly loved the Lord.

## Application

Of course, the Biblical canon is closed – there are no more books of the Bible to be written. And most of us are not being challenged right now to die as martyrs. How does this promise apply to us today? Well, we do believe that the Spirit of truth continues to guide us into all the truth of his Word that he has already written. Look at 1 Corinthians:

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might **understand** the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, **interpreting** spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person does not **accept** the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:12–14)

By guiding us into truth, the Spirit helps us understand, interpret, and accept the things of God. We need to see that without the help of the Spirit, people will not understand or accept the things of God. Believing in God is a supernatural ability. We cannot get mad when others do not accept Christ. We must pray. And when persecution eventually comes, we will be ready to face it by believing in God's promise. We will be ready to risk it all for the cause of Christ.

Jesus promises the Spirit as a Helper who will bear witness about Jesus, guiding us as we come to understand and accept the truth of God's Word.



## 2. Presence (18-24)

The second declaration is that Jesus offers the presence of God:

“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. **Because I live, you also will live.** In that day you will know that **I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.** Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” (John 14:18-21)

Jesus takes us back to the big issue: the disciples are afraid that Jesus will leave them alone in this world. Jesus hints that he will appear to them after his resurrection. He says that he will come to them and actually be with them. They will physically see him. And it will assure them that because he lives, they will also live. This resurrection assurance is also found in Romans:

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the **death** of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by this **life.** (Romans 5:10)

Back to our main passage, we have a question from Judas (not Iscariot). Judas Iscariot had already been dismissed to betray Jesus. I believe that the passage tells us directly that it's Judas (not Iscariot) because we are to remember that Jesus is talking to his real disciples here. We are reminded that this promise and God's presence is for true followers of Christ. And I think we are to see that this is a genuine question. Genuine believers want to know and understand what God is saying:

Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?” Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and **make our home with him.** Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. (John 14:22-24)

God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Spirit are going to come and make their home in those who truly love Jesus. This is unprecedented. God had slowly been revealing that he will make himself known, that he will even be amongst his people. But to actually have the presence of God make their home with you, room with you, live with you, dwell with you – this is incredible. Hear how this concept plays out in 2 Corinthians, where if the Spirit dwells in individual believers, he also has a prominent place in the community of the church:

What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my **dwelling** among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (2 Cor 6:16)

## Application

What does it mean to have the presence of God in your life? It means at least this: that no matter where you are, you can never be away from his truth, from his reality. Is this not what God’s presence means? When he is with you, you are aware of his being. You are aware of his existence. You are aware that he is here. For believers, God’s presence directly corresponds to what we know about him because it’s what he has revealed to us about himself. He has made himself and his truth known to us. We have heard it. In 1 John, we are told that we must let God’s truth abide in us:

Let what you heard from the beginning **abide** in you. If what you heard from the beginning **abides** in you, then you too will **abide** in the Son and in the Father. (1 John 2:24)

What you heard from the beginning, namely: the Gospel truth of Jesus Christ conquering sin and death – let this truth abide in you. Do you live in this reality? Do you live with this perspective? Do you live with this attitude? We cannot go about our lives as if we do not know the truth. Unrepentant sinners suppress the truth of God. Believers can’t help but see the world through the lens of Scripture, living their lives in accordance with the resurrected Christ – our King. The presence of God is given to believers as we allow God’s Word to abide in us.





### 3. Power (25-26)

The third and final declaration is that Jesus gives us the power of God. I'm using this term power very purposefully. The Spirit really is God, and his power is supernatural power from God. We've been talking about the Spirit this entire time, but this is the first time where Jesus says that the Spirit is the Holy Spirit:

“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the **Helper, the Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in my name (John 14:25-26)

It's crucial to understand that the Holy Spirit is God. He is a part of the Triune Godhead, the Holy Trinity. He is not second-string or subordinate. And all of the power of God is there. The Holy Spirit is God, and Paul places Father, Son, and Spirit all together in this beloved benediction:

The grace of the Lord **Jesus Christ** and the love of **God** and the fellowship of the **Holy Spirit** be with you all. (2 Corinthians 13:14)

When people think of the Spirit's power, they usually think of miraculous healing or supernatural speaking in tongues. But in our passage today, Jesus presents to us a different type of power, distinctly tied to his word:

“he will **teach** you all things and **bring to your remembrance** all that I have said to you. (John 14:26)

Teaching and bringing to remembrance the wisdom and words of Jesus — this is the special power of the Spirit. This is especially meaningful for me as a preacher, because your believing and building up in the faith does not depend on my natural ability to persuade you. Our faith does not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God:

and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the **Spirit** and of **power**, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. (1 Corinthians 2:4-5)

## Application

The power of the Holy Spirit is astounding. Do you rely on your own strength to understand the Gospel? Do you rely on your own power for your personal spiritual growth and sanctification? You don't have to rely on your own abilities to make progress in the faith. You have the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit is actually better than if Jesus were sitting right here with you. Listen to what Jesus has to say:

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your **advantage** that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. (John 16:7)

Jesus is not physically here with us today, but he sent his Spirit. We do not need to rely on our own strength. It's actually to our advantage that Jesus left this world, because he does not need to be physically present to teach and remind us the things of God.

Believers have the special power of the Spirit, who teaches and brings to remembrance the wisdom and words of Jesus.



## Big Idea

Let's review what we learned in Jesus' three declarations of promise, presence, and power. First, Jesus promises the Spirit as a Helper who will bear witness, guiding us along as we come to understand and accept the truth of God's Word. Second, the presence of God is given to believers as we allow his Word to abide in us. Third, believers have the special power of the Spirit, who teaches and brings to remembrance the wisdom and words of Jesus. Promise, presence, and power.

When we boil it all down together, keeping in mind the context of how the disciples were afraid of Jesus leaving them alone in the world, and how Jesus framed his conversation about loving him and keeping his commandments, this is our big idea in a very simple statement: The Holy Spirit helps believers keep Christ's commands. This is a sure help that shows up with supernatural power. How can believers obey when Christ is away? It's the Holy Spirit who helps us keep Christ's commands. The Holy Spirit helps us love God, love others, and live a life of worship that honors Christ and gives glory to God.

## Gospel

It would be wrong for me to lead you to think that it's our obedience that earns our salvation. Even though the Holy Spirit helps us obey, that doesn't offer anything to our salvation – to our ability to be saved. We are saved by sovereign grace alone, saved from our sin by Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection from the grave. And we are promised eternal, everlasting life with him. But here's where the Holy Spirit comes in: you cannot come to truly believe without the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit needs to reveal this Gospel truth to you:

these things God has **revealed** to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit **searches** everything, even the depths of God. (1 Corinthians 2:10)

The Spirit reveals the truth and meaning of Christ's death and resurrection. He reveals it to you by opening your eyes, minds, and hearts to see. My prayer is that the Holy Spirit would move in you to believe. If you are not a Christian, this is my only application for you today: You must pray and ask God for the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth and meaning of Christ's death and resurrection, to your mind – but most importantly to your heart. Pray that God would build the bridge between his heart and yours. Pray that you would understand the depths and designs and purposes and plans of our glorious God, and the

message of salvation found in Jesus Christ alone. If you genuinely believe this, you can be sure you have saving faith, for no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3).

# Applications

## Store Up Scripture

For believers – when we look for applications – there are no explicit commands in this text. There is nothing that says “you must do this.” But there is one implicit command, and it is drawn from verses 25-26: he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Remember, the original context included the disciples, but this supernatural power still applies to us today. The Holy Spirit will bring God’s word to our remembrance. How will the Spirit bring to remembrance things that we have not heard? How will the Spirit bring to remembrance things that we do not know? He can’t. And so there is an implicit command that we must be exposed to God’s Word.

With school in session, you’re going to be giving yourself to so many things. Studying, club activities, after-school practice, meetings and lessons, games and competitions. Count the cost of where you spend your time. Are you making the most of your days? Are you putting in the work for your future but failing to prioritize the Word of God now? Practice being a faithful steward. Prepare yourself for when life gets busier. Discipline yourself to do well at your work while staying in the Bible. Soak yourself in Scripture. Saturate your mind with truth. Study it like your life depends on it – because it does. From preaching, reading, listening to podcasts, however you get God’s Word into your life – the Spirit cannot help you remember if Scripture is not stored and ready to go. Hide God’s Word in your heart. It will keep you from straying. It will keep you from sin.

I have **stored** up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.  
(Psalm 119:11)

## Stay in Step with the Spirit

Another application is that we must stay in step with the Spirit. This is a very explicit command in other parts of Scripture. Another way to say this is being led by the Spirit or walking by the Spirit. People might call this being sensitive to the Spirit. You’re probably familiar with the phrase being filled with the Spirit. This all just means being controlled by the Spirit. Living your life in

accordance with the Spirit. It's being convicted by the Spirit, and keeping up with his prerogatives and his mission. You must be filled with the Spirit in the different spheres of influence in our lives. It's how we can obey Christ no matter the situation or circumstance. At school, at home, alone, or with family and friends. Even when you're with your enemies. Even when you're online. You can obey. And our obedience will prove that you truly love Jesus.

You soak yourself in Scripture so you have the mind and heart and will of the Spirit inside of you, and now you can use it. Now you can deploy it. You can even speak the truth in love to others in your life. And this is how you apply the points of promise, presence, and power. You trust God's promise that he will help you, you practice his presence through prayer and Bible reading, and you act on his power by recalling Scripture and applying it to your life. And in case you object that focusing on our actions is just legalism or I'm not addressing the attitudes of our heart — it's the Holy Spirit who helps you truly believe and give you hope (Romans 15:13), resulting in real, unwavering, life-changing conviction:

Our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full **conviction**. (1 Thessalonians 1:5)



# Examples

I want to get really granular, giving you a couple of examples on how the Holy Spirit has helped me do this in my own life. I'm not perfect. I definitely struggle. But here are areas where I've found our gracious God to help fortify my faith by trusting his promise, feeling his presence, and experiencing his power.

How can you apply God's presence to your life? When you feel insecure, maybe about how you look or how you act, you can find safety and security in God's presence. Your Maker, your Creator, is with you and he knows you (Isaiah 41:10). He has knitted you in your mother's womb (Psalm 139:13). You are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14). You are designed with purposeful intention. And you are lavishly loved as God's child (1 John 3:1). And all of God's children come to eventually look like him. When you reflect the character of Christ, you are demonstrating his beauty and grace. And though our outer bodies are wasting away, you will in heaven have a glorious, radiant body, made to help you enjoy God forever (2 Corinthians 4:16).

When you fail a test, or when you don't get accepted into the college that you wanted, or when you face any academic or achievement-oriented disappointment in this life – you can remember that your worth is not in what you can do. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). You don't have to work for your worth because your value has already been declared at the cross. You have received the greatest gift of adoption, and God is your Abba, Father (Romans 8:15). You are infinitely valuable, infinitely precious, infinitely loved. You can continue to work heartily as for the Lord and not for man (Colossians 3:23). And you can say that by the grace of God I am what I am, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. (1 Corinthians 15:10). And when you do succeed or feel accomplished, you can give all glory to God, counting everything as rubbish when compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ (Philippians 3:8).

# Conclusion

I'm not going to lie. Being a Christian in the world is hard. And after coming back from retreats and spending an entire summer with your church friends, you might find yourself with a deep longing for fellowship, for community, and for more of God's presence and power in your life. God does promise that he will never leave you or forsake you. Jesus has promised us the Holy Spirit, sent from God the Father, who helps us keep Christ's commands. His promise, presence, and power are ours. And all praise goes back to God.

There's a story in John 2, about how the Spirit's power was demonstrated when Jesus was raised from the dead. The disciples were discouraged when Jesus had died on the cross. Even though Jesus had told them the plan, they had forgotten or were just unable to process how it was playing out. But with the supernatural help of the Holy Spirit, they were able to remember and believe:

When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples **remembered** that he had said this, and they **believed** the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. (John 2:22)

The Holy Spirit helps us remember, and brings us to believe in Scripture and in Jesus. If you have heard God's Word today, and you do not harden your hearts, you will remember what I said about the promise, presence, and power of the Holy Spirit. You will remember this moment. You will recall Scripture. The Holy Spirit helps believers keep Christ's commands. And your heart will be moved to trust and obey Jesus – keeping Christ's commands because you love him – until he returns.



# We Are Not Left Alone

Father, Son, and Spirit –  
All glory be to God!  
Who calls us as his children,  
Who bought us by his blood.

You promised us a helper  
As Christ's commands we keep.  
In loving God and others we  
Are sealed with joy and peace.

Beloved and adopted,  
We are not left alone.  
Your presence and your power  
Are gifts to guide us home.

Holy Spirit help us to  
Remember and to see:  
That Jesus is the Son in whom  
We hope and we believe.

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