



Growth Group Curriculum
Week 4 – May 9, 2021 – Romans 8:26-27; John 14:15-21

Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at church. In this time of the virus and social distancing, please meet safely outside or online. If your growth group would like to meet online or if you are aware of needs that the church can help fill, please let us know at connect@ljpres.org. Thank you for loving and caring for each other.

This week we look at the promise of the Holy Spirit in John 14, as well as how the Spirit helps us to pray in Romans 8. In John 14, right after Jesus has told his followers that he must return to the Father, he talks about sending another “advocate.” In one sense Jesus had been an advocate, but he would soon return to heaven and so another advocate was needed – “the Spirit of Truth,” or the Holy Spirit. The word for “advocate” literally means to come alongside and Jesus is saying the Holy Spirit would come alongside the disciples and future believers.

There was a new era that was about to dawn at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit would help to prompt the disciples, as well as us, on how to live and also remind us of what Jesus had said. The role of the Holy Spirit is to confirm and interpret the message proclaimed and demonstrated by Jesus. The Holy Spirit continues the revelation of Jesus, not by providing new teachings, but by taking what Jesus taught to a deeper level. The Holy Spirit also helps us to pray.

Throughout Romans 8, the apostle Paul has been talking about the Holy Spirit and in verses 26-27, he offers encouraging words about how the Holy Spirit helps us in our prayer life. Paul has talked about how hope carries us through our suffering, in verses 24-25, and now he reminds his listeners that it is the Holy Spirit who helps us when we are unable to pray, or feel as though we cannot find the words we want to pray.

We recognize that prayer has always been one of the great mysteries of the spiritual life. Some people find a disciplined prayer life an easy task, and others struggle with daily prayer. Regardless, Paul says, the Holy Spirit is with us. The Holy Spirit works in our weakness, in our groaning, in our inadequacy, and carries our burdens and hopes to God.



Even though we feel as though we cannot express the “right” words, it is fine, because God understands what the Holy Spirit is expressing. God has access to our hearts and God’s knowledge is not dependent on us being able to adequately express our concerns. He knows the pain and suffering we experience, as well as the desires of our hearts. God searches our hearts as the Holy Spirit “groans” on our behalf. This passage reminds us again that we are never alone and that even when we feel as though we cannot “truly” express ourselves in prayer, the Holy Spirit carries our prayers to God.

Exploring the Text

Romans 8:26-27;

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.

John 14:15-21

¹⁵ “If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹ 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.”

Questions

If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.

- 1) Do have a favorite place to pray?
- 2) Have you ever had an experience where you felt like the Holy Spirit was interceding with God on your behalf?
- 3) Our prayers are not always answered in the way in which we hope, yet sometimes they are.
 - A) Share about a time when you felt like God answered your prayer.
 - B) Share about a time when God did not answer your prayer as you had hoped.
- 4) Pastor Paul talked about how we sometimes feel inadequate when it comes to our prayer lives. We are not as disciplined as we would like to be. We don’t know what words to use. We are intimidated. Eugene Peterson links inadequacy and authenticity when he says, “The strongest sign of authenticity in what you and I are doing is the inadequacy we feel most of the time.” Does this quote help you as you think about your own prayer life? How does this quote apply to our prayer lives?



- 5) What do you think the apostle Paul meant when he wrote that God searches the hearts of His children?
- 6) If the Holy Spirit and Jesus are interceding for us and God is searching our hearts, why do we still need to pray?
- 7) How is your prayer life doing right now? What does a “strong” prayer life look like? Are there steps that you could be taking to be more disciplined in prayer?

