

The Spirit of Truth

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[0 : 00] Well, keep your Bibles open. We're going to do something a little different as we open up God's Word today. I want you to get out your phone. And I want you to check.

You connected? How many bars you got? Are you using our Wi-Fi?

I hope not, because we're live streaming. We need the bandwidth. We need the bandwidth. You see, we depend on these unseen connections all the time. Have you ever had no connection on your phone?

Just inexplicably, just no reception. Maybe for a whole day. Well, I can tell you, that will make me afraid.

Through that little device, that's how we keep our connections with people. I was at a training day for church staff a couple of years ago.

[1 : 02] It's a little loud, Jase. Can you just drop the volume of this down? I will only get louder. So I was at a training day for church staff, and they asked us all to turn off our phones.

It was to experience two hours of disconnected time. And the goal was to help us both feel the anxiety of not having our phone on, not being connected, to feel what we might miss out on, but to also encourage us to reflect and talk about self-care.

And so we were talking about self-care for a couple of hours, and we were one hour in. And it was great. My phone was off. Everyone was relaxed. And then this appeared on the screen.

Nick Freestone, please call senior minister. Urgent. And everyone laughed. They thought it was part of the training. But I knew it wasn't, and I ran outside because I was terrified.

I turned on my phone, and I called Steve. My eldest daughter, Isla, had broken her arm at preschool. My wife, Sam, who's leading the service today, had also had her phone off, happened to have her phone off at the same time, and we'd both miss calls to be able to be there with Isla, to be there in the ambulance with her, but also we met her at the hospital.

[2 : 31] That's how disconnected we were. Disconnecting from people is a fearful thought. So when I had the idea to leave Facebook, I was worried.

I contacted everyone on Facebook who I connected there with to say, hey, I'm going, message me or call me from now on. And then it came to actually switching it off.

And I felt afraid. I feared disconnection. What might I miss from not being here? And how would I be known by people if I wasn't on Facebook?

It actually, I'm ashamed to say, took me weeks to finally do it. Because disconnecting from people makes me afraid. I'm someone who wrestles with social isolation.

According to studies, social isolation is the fastest-growing negative contributor to mental health issues in our city. It can develop into illnesses like chronic anxiety and depression and more.

[3 : 43] And COVID-19 contributed to this rise. We're all disconnected from each other and isolated physically. But social isolation was a problem before 2020.

And it hasn't stopped being a problem after COVID. And while online tools like social media can connect people in a way that, when they can't be connected, just like those live streaming at home today unable to be here, when online relationships replace the real-world ones, it contributes to building social isolation.

I can tell you that in Chatswood, where we are, the high number of us living in high-rise, our multi-ethnic and multi-lingual nature as a community, those things also restrict our natural opportunity for building relationships.

So, suburbs like ours in Sydney have high rates of social isolation. One in seven people in our city are socially isolated physically, or they feel socially isolated no matter what.

Chatswood is poor, not in food or water, but in life-giving relationships that we were created for. Our busyness and our closeness packed into our skyline hides a disconnectedness that needs a solution.

[5 : 22] These studies suggest joining special interest groups or sports teams or clubs in person or even online, or go get a pet. But those things alone can't curb the rise of social isolation.

What we actually need are tangible relationships of love. Many of us are fearful that we'll never find those. Or if we have them, we're desperately afraid that we might lose them.

All people in Chatswood need help staying connected in an unbreaking way to at least one life-giving relationship of love. And in today's part of the Bible, that Mel just read, Jesus was speaking to his disciples in a moment where they were grieving because they feared disconnection from Jesus, who loved them and who they loved in return.

He had been telling his disciples that this very hour, he would disconnect from them. One of them would betray him. Another would disown him. They grieve losing connection with Jesus and their safety and their identity together with him.

So look at your Bibles. Put your phone down. It's all right if you're still looking at it, checking to see what Nick's going to do with your phone. Pick up your Bible. We're going to look at chapter 15.

[6 : 52] If you scan back just to the paragraph before from verse 18, there Jesus describes how the hate and violence against him and his message, when he's gone, that's going to shift and pull towards the disciples.

They don't just fear losing their best friend, they fear the hatred of the world turning against them when Jesus is gone. If you flick back even further to chapter 13, how will these men be known when Jesus goes?

I imagine them wondering, we can't follow him where he's going. Who are we if Jesus is gone? Jesus is redefining their identity, no longer through the proximity to Jesus, not even friendship with him, but defined in their relationships of love with one another.

Jesus understands their fears, losing his protection, losing their identity as his disciple, and losing his love.

One way you can see their fear is more than just grief, is in verse 5 of our passage today. So have a look, verse 5 of chapter 16.

[8 : 21] Jesus says there, none of you asked me where are you going? If you've been with this in the last few weeks, you might remember that Peter actually did ask exactly that, word for word, Jesus, where are you going?

Did Jesus forget? Is there an error in the gospel? Imagine a little child wakes up one morning and sees their parent already dressed and walking out the door going to work.

The little child yells out, where are you going? What the child is feeling is, why are you leaving me? They don't care where the parent is going. They fear disconnection from their loved one. This is how Jesus can say that no one asks where he is going, because Jesus hears Peter's grieving heart cry out, why are you leaving?

So, Jesus promises that he will give them someone to keep them and all his followers to come, a connection with him when he is gone, of love, security, and identity.

[9 : 50] So, Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will come. He's already promised this in previous chapters. Dan, two weeks ago, when he preached, he described it as God's ongoing presence with us.

Jesus' ongoing presence with his disciples. But here, Jesus calls the Holy Spirit by a new name, three times, the Spirit of Truth.

And this is crucial, because the Spirit of Truth is how our isolated humanity need, what our isolated humanity need.

Because the Spirit of Truth connects us to Jesus through the Bible. Jesus promises that this connection will come, but only if he gets up from this meal with his disciples and goes to the cross. So, here is how this Spirit of Truth, how Jesus says the Holy Spirit will connect us to him in a life-giving relationship of love.

[11 : 04] When he comes, the Spirit of Truth will do three things. Convict the world, witness to all the truth about Jesus, and glorify Jesus.

So, first, the Spirit of Truth comes to convict the world. Securing convictions is the role of the prosecutor.

You've probably seen it on TV. You might have even been in a courtroom, and you've seen a prosecutor at work. In that moment, they're not an advocate or a helper, as we've heard the Holy Spirit described so far, even in our passage today in verse 7.

So, how does the Holy Spirit also act, not just as a helper or an advocate, but also as a prosecutor? Have a look at verse 8. When he, the Holy Spirit, comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin, righteousness, and judgment.

It's a nice sunny day today, so it's easy to imagine. But imagine someone going out for a swim at a beach. It's calm.

[12 : 21] It's warm. The sun is, but that great balance of warming you up, but not beating you down. And a swimmer goes out just past the little waves and swims out easily.

He's having a great time. But then a lifeguard blows the whistle, calls out in the megaphone, not safe! The swimmer hears and tries to swim back, but there's this outgoing current against them. They thrash against it, but they're too weak to fight it. They become afraid. They begin to panic. They accept their fate, and... I'm just going to leave it there.

You have to wait to find out what happens. The Holy Spirit is a helper and a prosecutor who warns all people, all sinful people, of their error, like a lifeguard alerting a swimmer.

See, people in Chatswood don't know that they're drowning. An abundant life that they need, they're not going to get in the mall. They're not going to find it on their screen.

[13 : 34] Not even in their deepest relationships with those around them. They need a relationship with the God who created them. And the whole reason that Jesus came to earth was to offer that connection to all people, those same people who don't know they need that connection.

Jesus calls out to the swimmer through the Holy Spirit with a message of conviction. You're not safe! The Spirit needs to warn us in the first place because all people get their response to sin and unrighteousness and judgment completely wrong without Jesus.

I read this week that Tim Keller, when he had little kids at home, was watching them watch cheesy Bible cartoons on TV.

I don't know if you've seen the kind of cartoons I'm talking about, but they're oversimplified children's stories. And he overheard this teaching in those cartoons.

They summarized the Bible like this. man's attempt to find and connect with God. And Tim Keller says, that's the Bible backwards.

[15 : 02] Instead, the Bible is man's constant running from God, away from his love and authority. And it's God's constant pursuit of people to show them his love.

Do you hear the difference? many of us Christians hear the warning of our sin against God, our need to be righteous before him, and the coming judgment of sin that leads to death and hell, and we try to avoid it by our strength of mind and will on our own.

A follower of Jesus is not like a swimmer who can beat the current. but one who feels sin's power over them and calls out to the lifeguard for help.

Jesus says in our passage today that we cannot, in verse 12, bear this truth alone. The warning call of the Holy Spirit calls out our inability to swim against the undertow of sin, trusting in our own good behavior our own power to change ourselves, our own ability to prove ourselves worthy of life beyond judgment day.

And the Holy Spirit reveals how Jesus meets those needs for purity, for righteousness, and to be pleasing before God. Even before we've asked to be saved.

[16 : 43] Even before we know we are drowning. and if you've ever wrestled against God, if you've heard about God in the Bible or you've heard about Jesus somewhere along in your journey or maybe even right now today, you're discovering sinfulness, your unrighteousness, your fear of judgment, your worry about disconnection from God, that is a sign that the Spirit of truth is at work in your life right now through conviction.

And it will happen, the Spirit will work even before you know Jesus yet, even before you are His follower. What an amazing power.

you don't receive the Holy Spirit and a connection with God of life-giving love by sorting out your life, making better choices, measuring up to the way that would please God enough.

Instead, the Spirit acts before we know we need Him and convicts us, the world and all people of their desperate need to connect with God.

Jesus shows us that when the Spirit of truth comes into our lives, it will warn us of our need for connection with God and guide us into what is true, into all the truth, where we will find ourselves lifted safely out of the water, having done nothing to save ourselves.

[18 : 29] The Spirit of truth will guide us to Jesus loved, secure and His through truth. So, look at this verse that I believe shows us why Jesus gave the Holy Spirit a new name in our passage today, the Spirit of truth.

Look at verse 13. But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth. truth, the truth Himself, Jesus, the way, the truth and the life. Jesus is showing us how the Spirit of truth connects us to Him through truth, through all the truth and all the truth about Him.

for those who don't like hearing the same word over and over again, truth, truth, truth, truth. This might be hard on your ears, but bear with me. Because truth is a thing.

Babies yearn to eat because food exists. Before ducklings have ever heard, seen, or been told about the water, they yearn to swim.

[19 : 49] So many true things exist to fulfill the created yearnings in people. A yearning for truth pulls on everyone.

Truth from God, our Creator, would meet our created yearning for truth in a way that truth found within ourselves, or even truth found out there in the world, cannot.

And this is the kind of truth that the spirit of truth guides us toward. So what kind of truth is it? The spirit of truth will reveal all the truth.

Many English translations like the New Living Translation, you might have that translation in front of you from the Greek, NLT, they miss one word in this passage.

See if you can spot it. I've put it on the screen for us. The spirit will come and guide you into all truth. The word that's missing is the the.

[21 : 03] Doesn't seem that important, does it? The Greek that this is translated from literally says all the truth, not all truth. And here's why it's dangerous to miss this word.

The spirit of truth does not guide us into all truth about everything. There is a collection of truth, that is the truth that we need.

And this means that studying the world and people, whether it be science, whether it be some other pursuit, we can find truth in the world that isn't written down in the Bible, that isn't what Jesus is talking about here.

Instead, this passage is talking about a specific collection of truth that creates connection with God. Also, the spirit of truth does not guide us into all truth in an ongoing, evolving sense, where the adding to or the taking away from the truth is expected or acceptable.

To add to the truth is to read all truth in our Bibles and then hear Jesus saying, 2,000 years from now, someone will get special information from me, some new truth that will change the meaning of my words in the Bible.

[22 : 28] No, that's not what Jesus is saying. Anyone who adds to the Bible is trying to gain power over us rather than yielding to all the truth.

This is not all the truth as the spirit reveals, but their truth. And an invasive movement in our city and its suburbs, in its churches, is to read all truth and then decide for themselves what that is and subtract from the truth.

Take the Bible's teaching on gender and sexuality, for example. How do modern minds in our city think about those topics? There are so many more as well. But consider this, 100 years ago in our city, and you can, sadly, you can look this up, the thought in our city was that there were people groups who were less evolved than others.

That was what people thought. That's unthinkable today. That's not the truth. truth. But in another hundred years, what will our society be laughing about or embarrassed by that we think is all truth in our city right now?

If your modern mind looks at the Bible and sees fit to reject bits of it, then you're rejecting the all-the-truth nature of it. all-the-truth is instead referring to a body of truth that Jesus will give to his followers that will detail all humanity needs to connect with him.

[24 : 27] So what is this all-the-truth? It's really simple, actually. It's all-the-truth about Jesus. All-the-truth that the Spirit would provide was not new truth, but all that Jesus had said and done already and would say and do before leaving.

Illuminated by the Spirit of Truth. So have a look at verse 26. The Spirit of Truth, He will testify about me, and you must also testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

The Spirit of Truth worked uniquely through the apostles. That is, the disciples, plus Paul, who Jesus met with, as they taught and wrote down all Jesus said and did.

And when the apostles had all died, the new church, the followers of Jesus, gathered up all of their teachings and writings, even some by others who referred to their teachings and writings, gathered them into a book that we call the New Testament.

Our Bible contains all the truth that Jesus promises here. That's what Jesus has in mind the whole time. Eyewitness, testimony, remembered, recorded, and shared, empowered by the Spirit of Truth.

[26 : 00] There is truth, there is a collection of truth, that is all the truth we need to connect with God, and it's all about Jesus, because all the truth in the Bible reveals Jesus, and in it we find a connection to Him and a life-giving relationship of love.

And when the Spirit of Truth comes, number three, He will glorify Jesus. Or another way to say that is He will help us see the glory of Jesus.

have you ever fallen in love with someone? Maybe you'd like to, maybe you haven't yet. Let me describe what happens in that moment.

When we fall in love, we see the glory of that person. The word glory here means weight. weight. And it's more than just like their quality or their beauty out of ten. It is their importance and their significance.

[27 : 13] Seeing glory leads to love. The Spirit of Truth reveals Jesus' weight in the Bible.

importance, His significance, and His beauty. The Spirit does this so we would fall in love with Jesus.

So, I point this out to ask the question, do you love Jesus? Is He the greatest love in your life? That's what the Spirit of Truth does.

The disciples saw face-to-face Jesus' glory. His love toward them was astounding. His works were incredible. He spoke and they heard and felt God and they loved Him back.

But with Jesus leaving, it's now the Holy Spirit's role. The Spirit of Truth helps us see what the disciples got to see in person.

[28 : 21] Glory that makes us love Jesus. Look with me at 16 verse 1.

All this I have told you, says Jesus, so that you will not fall away. Jesus is promising that this spirit of truth will keep us connected to Him.

And the more literal translation of fall away here is an abrupt, shocking disconnection, not a slow slide away from faith.

Jesus had already said Judas would betray him. Judas is already gone at this point. He also predicted that Peter would deny him three times.

Tonight! That night! And sadly, he predicts one more final fall away that includes all the disciples.

[29 : 31] Look right down to the end of the chapter there, verse 32. A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered each to your own home, you will leave me all alone.

Jesus leaving his disciples will begin with them leaving him. Everything the disciples were afraid of, their disconnection with Jesus, no longer being safe with him, losing their identity as his followers, starts with their choice to leave Jesus all alone, to face the mob and the trial and the slaughter of tomorrow.

What love Jesus has. Knowing that his leaving will start with our and their unbelief in him.

He willingly promised them a life life-giving relationship of love to be forever connected and present with them through the spirit of truth, on the night they will all break relationship with him.

Jesus leaving was to be left alone, submitting to execution on a cross, with all the sin and unrighteousness on his shoulders, dying and facing all the judgment of all who have abandoned him and given up their connection with God and he did it all to pursue a connection with us.

[31 : 14] all who don't even want that connection with him yet. He yielded his right to life, to offer it to us, uncondemned, pure and pleasing to God, and rose to life to restore the connection to all who would believe in him.

And the fact that Jesus, spoiler alert, rose from the dead and restored his relationship with his disciples face to face, even Peter shows just how far he will go to pursue those who fall away, to provide an eternal life-giving relationship of love with him.

Friends, Jesus is the relationship you need to break out of any social isolation that you feel. It's the connection you need that resolves your social need through spiritual means.

No matter where you're at on your journey of receiving the Spirit's truth in your life, whether it's convicting you of your need with sin, unrighteousness, and judgment, breaking your hope of connecting to God your own way, or as the Spirit witnesses to Jesus, his works, words, and love toward you in the Bible, building up your love for him, even when you fail him, he will never break off connection with you.

If you have received the Spirit of Truth through believing in him as the Spirit of Truth reveals all the truth in the Bible. when the Bible is open to you, and there might be every day, it might be every week, it might be not very often yet, but ask the Spirit of Truth to show you Jesus, and trust the Spirit of Truth, not yourself, to keep and enjoy your connection with God, a life-giving relationship of love that can start even today.

[33 : 34] In him you are never isolated, always in love, and eternally connected to the God who pursues you, even through your seasons of sorrow and grief, through the Spirit of Truth.

See, Jesus knows you need connection, Chatswood. He is where you will find what you need. You can't find him your own way, only through the Spirit of Truth.

So explore the Bible, find Jesus, and the Spirit of Truth will connect you to Jesus. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, thank you for promising and sending the Spirit of Truth to guide us as we read and explore the Bible. convict us, guide us, and help us to fall in love with you as we see your glory. Amen.