

Jesus's Farewell Message

# Session 5: Better with the Spirit

## **SESSION GOALS**

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

### **Main Idea**

The invisible realities of our lives—our sure hope in Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit—should change the way we view and react to our circumstances.

### **Head Change**

To know we will face temporary trouble in life, but also that our distress will turn to joy when Christ returns.

### **Heart Change**

To feel the pervading peace and joy of God as we put our hope in Jesus.

### **Life Change**

To trust in the work of the Holy Spirit as he convicts and leads us.

## **OPEN**

**When has a bad situation in your life turned out to lead to a happy ending?**

Some situations are not what they seem. An unwanted circumstance can lead to a better ending than you had imagined. In John 13–17, the disciples only knew that Jesus would be leaving them. They did not know where he was going, or even why he was leaving. All they knew was the fear and anxiety of Jesus leaving them behind.

In this session, Francis Chan will guide us through all the benefits the disciples gained when Jesus left them. These benefits—including the blessing of the Holy Spirit—are also ours when we follow Jesus.

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**DISCUSS**

Francis opened the session highlighting a problem: we struggle to believe in things we cannot see. In the West, we tend to trust in the scientific method—things we can see, touch, and feel. Invisible realities feel unsubstantial and more difficult to rely on. **Why do you think it is hard for us to trust “the invisible”?**

*[Note: To dig deeper into the value and beauty of the invisible realities surrounding us, go to **Go Deeper Section 1** at the end of this study.]*

We struggle with what we cannot see, especially the looming reality of the future. Jesus told his disciples what they had to look forward to, but it wasn’t going to be easy. Read John 16:1–4, 31–33. **What did the disciples have to look forward to when Jesus left them? Why was Jesus telling his disciples about their hard futures?**

Jesus shared a grim picture of the future. None of us wants to hear that we will be kicked out of our places of worship, be scattered and separated, be filled with anxiety, or become martyrs. But Jesus shared this difficult future with his disciples so that they would be kept “from stumbling” and have peace. **In what ways could knowing that difficult times will come keep us from falling away from our faith?**

If we expect difficulty, we will not be surprised when our lives take unexpected turns. Preparing ourselves today for our unknown future can actually help us endure those circumstances with more faith and resilience. **What circumstances cause you to worry about the future? What could it look like to turn your worry about the future over to Jesus?**

We can be at peace during hardship because Christ has overcome sin and death on the cross and the Holy Spirit is still at work within us today. But what does the Holy Spirit actually do? Read John 16:5–16. **What three benefits would the Advocate give to the disciples? In what ways do you benefit from these blessings?**

When Jesus left, he was able to send the Holy Spirit who convicts the world of sin, leads us in all truth, and glorifies Jesus. Conviction doesn’t sound like a blessing; most of us would rather avoid it. But conviction is the Holy Spirit’s

Horizontal lines for writing.

warning light to tell us something is wrong and direct us to be more like Jesus. **Why do you think it is easier to avoid conviction than it is to face our sins and flaws? What could it look like to listen and respond to the Spirit's conviction when you feel it?**

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Not only does the Holy Spirit convict us of sin, but he also proves the world wrong. When people revile you, we can be sure that God has not abandoned us. He is at work disproving the work of the world. **How do you typically react when people challenge your faith? What could you do to trust in the Holy Spirit when people oppose you because of your faith?**

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*[Note: To understand why people oppose those who follow Jesus and to learn how to respond to that opposition, go to **Go Deeper Section 2** at the end of this study.]*

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Finally, the Advocate glorifies Jesus. The Spirit is like a spotlight in a dark concert hall, shining solely on Jesus. He directs us to focus on him in every situation. **Where in your life is the Spirit encouraging you to focus more on Jesus?**

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Jesus promised his disciples that they would have a difficult future. It's not the kind of thing we want to hear from our Lord, but even in suffering there is hope. Read John 16:20–24. **In what ways is our suffering like childbirth?**

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*[Note: We did not have time to look at all of John 16 in this session. If you would like to study the last verses in John 16, go to **Go Deeper Section 3** at the end of this study.]*

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Like in childbirth, the momentary suffering we experience in this life will lead to inexplicable joy when Christ returns. But in the meantime, we still face the difficulties of life and an uncertain immediate future. For some of us, thinking about the future makes us anxious. The uncertainty of next week or next year is unsettling. For others, the potential and possibilities of tomorrow are thrilling. **When you think about your future, what do you see? Are you excited about what is coming? Why, or why not?**

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The truth is that our futures will be a mixture of good and bad days but, at the end of our story, we have the promise of joy. We don't have to worry about good times in our lives coming to an end because we know there will be

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greater joy in our future. And, in times we never imagined or wanted, we can be at peace because we know they will all come to an end. **How does the promise of joy change the way you see your current experiences?**

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When we are suffering, talking about joy and hope may feel dismissive of our pain. But Jesus doesn't tell us to ignore our pain. We should not avoid our grief, but we can know that it is temporary. Jesus promises that our stories will end in enduring, unbreakable joy. **In what ways do you need to grieve today? What hope does Jesus's promise give you in your current circumstances?**

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We may struggle to feel the Spirit in our lives or think that the invisible God is near to us. During those times, it is hard to trust him. It can be difficult to even pray. But Jesus wants us to talk to him, to pray and ask for what we need. He wants our joy to be complete. **What needs do you have that only God can meet? What would it look like to pray for those needs, even when you don't feel like God is near?**

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**LAST WORD**

We can struggle to believe in a Spirit we cannot see and may not often feel. We might doubt that our grief will turn to joy in an invisible future. But, through Jesus's words in John 16, God is asking us to trust him.

He has promised us peace, confidence, and joy. The Holy Spirit guides us toward Jesus and teaches us to live like him. No matter what you are going through or will experience, you can trust the sure promises of the invisible God.

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Hebrews 11:1–3 tells us that faith is being convinced of what we cannot see, understanding that the world was made by an invisible God who is still active today. Though we cannot see him, he has not hidden from us. Faith requires trust, but it is not blind. Because of Jesus, we can be convinced of what we do not see. **What can make it difficult for you to trust an invisible God? How might your doubts or questions find their answers in the work and person of Jesus?**

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Even though God is invisible, he is not hiding from us. He has made himself known through Jesus, the Spirit, and his Word. But, because we cannot see him, we do have to have faith that he is present and active in our lives. **What could it look like for you to trust God—the present and invisible One—more deeply this week?**

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**2. Our Battle Is Not Against Flesh and Blood**

It can be easy to look at people who condemn, mock, or disagree with us and think that they are our enemies. Our society often encourages us to distance ourselves from people we disagree with. But the Bible confronts our divisiveness and leads us down a more effective path. Read Ephesians 6:10–20. **According to this passage, whom are we arming ourselves against?**

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**In what ways could fighting one another distract us from our true enemy?**

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Take a look at the pieces of God’s armor in verses 14–17. **What “armor” are we encouraged to wear? Do you feel like these qualities are what we most need in today’s world? Why, or why not?**

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Verses 18–19 tell us what to do once we have put on all of God’s armor. **What should we be doing at all times as Christians? What commands do these verses give us concerning how to treat one another?**

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**Who are some Christians, or saints, you could be praying for today?**

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**What do you think it looks like to be an “alert” Christian? What could you do to be more aware of the needs of your fellow Christians?**

Unlike most soldiers, we aren’t commanded to fight, but to pray, love, and persevere. We aren’t called to dominate or

win arguments, but to share the mystery of the gospel. Paul refers to himself as an ambassador in Ephesians 6:20, but it is a position all of us share. Our strategy isn't about defeating our enemies but about pleading with them to know God. **In what ways would our cultural engagement be different if we engaged with non-Christians as ambassadors? What steps could you take to live as an ambassador in your spheres of influence?**

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### 3. Belief in Part

At the end of John 16, the disciples seem to have a breakthrough. Much of what Jesus has said has gone over their heads, leaving them confused. But, finally, they seem to understand what Jesus is talking about. Read John 16:28–33.

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Despite their understanding, it seems like the disciples only believed Jesus in part. After Jesus is arrested, the disciples:

- Fled (Matthew 26:56)
- Denied Jesus (John 18:15–18, 25–27)
- Doubted his return (John 20:24–25)
- Hid from the world (John 20:26)
- Returned to their old lifestyles (John 21:2–3)

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Their actions didn't appear to be those of men who trusted their Lord and his promised return. The disciples trusted Jesus while he was with them; that is clear. But once the promised difficulties arrived, they faltered. Many of us have been in the same place. **What circumstances have made you doubt God? What specific doubts did you have?**

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Like the disciples, we could try to flee, deny Jesus, hide from our problems, or return to what our lives were before Jesus. But none of these options solves our problems and only separate us from the one who sustains us through the storms of life. **What is your typical reaction to the troubles of life?**

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Jesus promises in John 16:22 that our distress will turn to joy, that temporary pains will be wiped away. **What does it look like to stand firm in your suffering, trusting in Jesus and the joy that is to come?**

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In verse 33, we see that Jesus encourages us to be courageous because he is victorious over the world. A fully devoted disciple of Jesus can not only endure the troubles of life but can also face them head-on. **What**

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**would change in your life if you lived courageously,  
knowing that your serve the one who has conquered  
the world?**