

SESSION 6

The Promise of the Paraclete

John 14 • John 16 • John 20

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

On the night before he died, Jesus promised his frightened friends "another Paraclete" who would be with them for ever, teach them everything, and dwell not just with them but in them, and made the impossible claim that his own departure was to their advantage. Tonight participants learn who the Paraclete is and what he does, and then, in the live discovery, they walk into the locked room of Easter evening and watch Jesus breathe on the apostles, the down payment on everything he promised. The group that met the breath of God in Genesis in Session 1 now watches the risen Christ do Genesis 2:7 on purpose.

Catholic Touchstone

"Paraclete" is the name Jesus gives the Spirit: the one called alongside, the Advocate, Consoler, and Helper, the Spirit of truth who teaches and reminds (CCC 692). Jesus does not reveal the Spirit fully until he himself has been glorified, promising him as the one who will be with the Church for ever (CCC 728-729). Confirmation candidates, who received the Spirit at Baptism, are preparing for a fuller outpouring and strengthening of precisely the Person these chapters describe.

What You Need to Know

Parakletos. The Greek *parakletos* literally means "one called alongside": the friend you summon to stand next to you in trouble, especially in court. English Bibles split the word into Counselor, Comforter, Advocate, Helper, and every translation is a partial picture. Give the group the courtroom image: not a lawyer you hire, but the friend who stands beside you when you are accused, speaks for you, steadies you, and does not leave. Jesus says the Father will give ANOTHER Paraclete, which quietly tells us who the first one was.

What the Paraclete does. Collect the job description across the discourse: he will be with you for ever; he dwells with you and will be in you (there is Ezekiel's preposition again); he will teach you all things and bring to remembrance all that Jesus said; he will bear witness to Jesus; he will guide you into all the truth; he will not speak on his own authority but will glorify Jesus. Notice the last one especially: the Spirit glorifies Christ and draws believers to him rather than putting himself forward, which is one reason he is the Person of the Trinity people feel they know least.

The scandalous advantage. John 16:7 is the night's hardest and best sentence: "it is to your advantage that I go away." How could losing Jesus' physical presence ever be a good trade? Because while Jesus walked among us, his visible bodily presence was in one place at a time, beside his disciples; in his divinity, of course, the Son was never absent from anywhere, so speak carefully here. What the Ascension and Pentecost open is a new mode of communion: through the Spirit, Christ dwells within believers wherever they are. Beside is wonderful; within is the deeper intimacy. The group has been prepared for exactly this by the prophets: from upon to within was the promise, and this is its mechanism.

The discovery is a payoff. The live discovery tonight is John 20:19-23, the locked room, and it is the same passage you glimpsed cold at the end of Session 1, five weeks ago. Some participants will feel the echo without placing it; one or two may place it exactly. Either way, do not explain the design. When they find the passage and someone says "wait, we have heard this before," the correct leader response is a smile and "have we?"

For the parents in the room. The Paraclete's job description includes "bring to your remembrance." Parents of teenagers live on this promise more than they know: years of prayers, examples, and words that seem to have vanished into an unresponsive adolescent are not gone; they are material the Spirit can retrieve for the rest of that child's life. A parent discouraged about whether anything is sticking should leave tonight with John 14:26 in their pocket.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- "He dwells with you, and will be in you" (John 14:17) is Ezekiel 36:27 ("I will put my Spirit within you") arriving at the front door. The prepositions the group tracked in Session 4 reappear on Jesus' own lips.
- Jesus breathing on the apostles (John 20:22) deliberately reenacts Genesis 2:7, God breathing life into the first man: the new creation begins the way the first one did. Thread A, planted in Session 1, pays out here and completes at Pentecost.
- "Another Paraclete" (John 14:16) has its echo in 1 John 2:1, where Jesus himself is our Advocate (parakletos) with the Father: tonight's Dig Deeper.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine of Hippo (*Tractates on the Gospel of John*)

Commenting on Jesus' words that the world cannot receive the Spirit of truth because it neither sees him nor knows him, St. Augustine explained that the Spirit is not known the way objects are known, by looking. He is known by being possessed, the way you know love: from within, by having it. The world that insists on seeing before believing will never see him; the soul that receives him knows him better than sight could tell.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Alexandria (*Commentary on the Gospel of John*)

St. Cyril of Alexandria took up the hardest sentence, that Jesus' departure was to our advantage, and answered it plainly: while Christ dwelt among his disciples in the flesh, he was present beside them; when he ascended and sent the Spirit, Christ came to dwell within them. The Spirit does not replace an absent Christ with a substitute; he achieves a deeper intimacy with Christ than his bodily presence allowed. Beside became within, and within is better.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Gregory the Great (*Homilies on the Gospels, Homily 30*)

Preaching at Pentecost on these very chapters, St. Gregory the Great gave the test for whether the

Spirit truly dwells in a person: the proof of love is shown in deeds. Jesus ties the Paraclete's coming to keeping his word; so, Gregory says, do not ask first how the Spirit feels in you, ask what he is doing through you. A warmed heart is a gift; a changed life is the evidence.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 692.** "Paraclete" is the name Jesus uses for the Holy Spirit: he who is called to one's side, the Advocate and Consoler, the Spirit of truth.
- **CCC 728.** Jesus does not reveal the Holy Spirit fully until he himself has been glorified through his death and resurrection.
- **CCC 729.** Only when the hour arrives does Jesus promise the coming of the Paraclete who will be with the disciples and in them, teach them, and guide them into all truth.

Thread Watch

Thread A: The Breath. Major development tonight: the group discovers John 20:19-23 themselves, the passage glimpsed in Session 1. Jesus breathing on the apostles is Genesis 2:7 performed on purpose. The thread completes at Pentecost next week, when breath becomes wind. Confirm any echo a participant catches; explain no design.

Thread B check. The Paraclete is promised "for ever" and prayed over "those who believe through their word" (John 17:20, in your pocket for the steelman). The gift is aimed past the upper room at the all. Resolution next week.

Next week is the summit. Session 7 is Pentecost, where Threads A and B both resolve and Moses' wish, Joel's promise, the Jordan's pattern, and tonight's promises all detonate together. Prepare accordingly: reread Sessions 1-6 Thread Watch notes before next week. It is the one session you must not lead cold.

Session Goals

1. Participants can explain what parakletos means and give the courtroom-friend picture in their own words.
2. Participants have assembled the Paraclete's job description from the text and noticed "with you" becoming "in you."
3. Participants can explain, in their own words, why Jesus' going away could be to our advantage.
4. Participants have found the locked room themselves, and the breath of Session 1 has come back around.
5. The group has faced the "promises for apostles only" objection at full strength, with the honest remainder named.

Time Note

Full plan runs about 75 minutes. To land at 60, make these cuts and no others: drop Win question 2 (keep question 1), skip the Dig Deeper box on 1 John 2:1, and present the steelman objection yourself in one minute rather than building it with the group. Never cut the advantage question or the live discovery of the locked room; those carry the session.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit, Paraclete: called to our side, Advocate in our accusations, Comforter in our fears, Teacher of everything we keep forgetting. Jesus promised You to frightened people in an upstairs room, and You came. We are not so different from them. Stand beside us tonight, and better than beside: dwell within. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win: Opening Questions

Parent and candidate pairs. Two minutes each question, then a few pairs share with the table.

1. Who is the person who "has your back," the one who shows up and stands next to you when things get hard? How did they earn that place?
2. What is the best advice anyone ever gave you, and do you remember it at the moments you actually need it?

Build: Into the Text

Scene One: Another Paraclete (John 14:15-17, 25-26)

Households read John 14:15-26 at home. Have verses 15-17 and 25-26 read aloud now.

Question 1. Jesus promises "another Counselor." The Greek word is *parakletos*: literally, one called alongside, the friend who stands next to you in court. Two things to chew: what does that picture tell us about what the Spirit is FOR? And if this one is "another" Paraclete, who was the first?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The picture tells us the Spirit is given for our defense and our company: not a force to use but a Person who stands with the accused, speaks for them, steadies them, and stays. And "another" quietly identifies the first Paraclete as Jesus himself, the one who has been standing beside these men for three years. Jesus is not promising them a replacement for himself; he is promising them Someone of the same kind, so that what they have had in him, they will never lose. First John later completes the pair: Jesus remains our Advocate with the Father, while the Spirit is the Advocate within us.

Question 2. Build the Paraclete's job description as a table, out loud, from verses 16-17 and 25-26 (add John 16:13-14 if your table is fast). List everything Jesus says the Spirit will do or be. Then find the two little prepositions in verse 17 and tell me why a graduate of Session 4 should sit up straight.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The list: with you for ever; the Spirit of truth; dwells WITH you and will be IN you; will teach you all things; will bring to your remembrance all that I have said; (16:13-14) will guide you into all the truth, will not speak on his own authority, will glorify me. The prepositions: "he dwells with you, and will be in you." With, becoming in. That is Ezekiel 36:27, "I will put my Spirit within you," arriving on the lips of Jesus as a scheduled delivery. The promise the prophets mailed in Session 4 now has a date: soon, and connected to whatever is about to happen to Jesus. Also mark the Spirit's style in 16:13-14: he will not speak on his own authority, and he glorifies Jesus. The Spirit's way is to

point to Christ and draw us to him, which is why you rarely find him by looking straight at him. You find him by looking where he points.

Question 3. Now the impossible sentence. Have someone read John 16:5-7. Jesus says his going away is TO OUR ADVANTAGE, because otherwise the Paraclete will not come. Argue with him for a minute: would you rather have Jesus physically here, visible, touchable? Then work out how his answer could possibly be right.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Let the argument actually happen; most honest people would take Jesus-in-the-flesh, and saying so out loud makes the answer land. The resolution: a body is in one place. While Jesus walked in the flesh, he was BESIDE his disciples, external to them, one town at a time; Thomas could be far from him, and everyone after the first century would be. Through the Spirit, Christ dwells WITHIN every believer, everywhere, always, at Springfield and in the first century at once. St. Cyril of Alexandria said it exactly: beside became within, and within is the deeper intimacy. Then the payoff for your room: if Jesus was telling the truth here, then a Confirmation candidate in Nebraska is not living in the leftovers of a better era. They are living in the era Jesus called the advantage.

Scene Two: Live Discovery

Do not announce the passage. Read the clue and let the tables hunt. Allow three or four minutes; if they stall, tell them it is on Easter day, in the evening. (The "locked room" is the study's shorthand; John says the doors were shut for fear.)

DIG DEEPER

The clue. *"A locked room, because the men inside are afraid. Suddenly he is standing among them, and he shows them his hands and his side. Then he does something with his breath that nobody has done since a garden at the beginning of the world. Find the room."*

When found, have the discovering table read John 20:19-23 aloud, slowly. If anyone says this sounds familiar, smile and say: "Does it?"

Question 4. Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Where else in Scripture does God breathe the breath of life into a human being, and what happened then? What is Jesus declaring by doing it again, on purpose, with his risen body?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Genesis 2:7: the LORD God breathed into the man's nostrils the breath of life, and dust became a living being; nowhere else does Scripture show God breathing life into a human being. Session 1, scene two; some tables will get there fast. By breathing on the apostles, the risen Jesus is deliberately performing the creation of man again: a new Genesis, a new humanity, beginning in a locked room with ten frightened men. The promise of the Paraclete has its down payment on Easter evening itself. And notice what the breath is immediately for in verse 23: the forgiveness of sins, given to the apostles as a commission. The new creation runs on mercy, and it is administered by

men who were hiding an hour before.

Question 5. Hold the two scenes side by side: the promise (the Spirit will be in you, teach you, stay for ever) and the locked room (receive the Holy Spirit). Here is the puzzle to leave open: if the apostles received the Spirit on Easter evening, why does Jesus, in Luke and Acts, still tell these same men to WAIT in Jerusalem for something more? What might be left?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Do not resolve this; sharpen it. The texts stand: Easter evening, "Receive the Holy Spirit," and forty days later, "wait for the promise of the Father... you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." The risen Christ gives the Spirit, and then insists there is a further, public, empowering gift still coming for the same men. Whatever we make of that, one cheap answer dies tonight: "you already received the Spirit, so nothing more could be given" is a sentence the apostles' own story contradicts. God, apparently, gives the Spirit in more than one act, for more than one purpose. Let the group carry the puzzle out the door; next week answers it with wind and fire.

The Push-Back: Promises for Eleven Men Only?

Build the objection at full strength before answering it. Ask the group to make it as strong as they can with you.

The objection. Read the room these promises were made in. Jesus is speaking to the Eleven, at one supper, on one night. "He will teach you all things" and "bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" can only apply to men who heard what Jesus said in the first place; you cannot be reminded of teaching you never received. "Guide you into all the truth" was fulfilled in the unique, foundational apostolic witness, preserved for all ages in the completed canon of Scripture, and it is finished. These are apostolic credentials, not a standing offer, and applying them to modern Christians, or worse, to a modern Church claiming the Spirit's ongoing guidance, is taking mail addressed to eleven men.

Question 6. The observation about the audience is genuinely right, so start by granting it. Then read John 14:16 again slowly, and John 17:20, and see what refuses to fit inside one generation.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Grant the center: these words were spoken to the apostles, and some of the promises are apostolic first: "bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" is precisely why apostolic testimony, and the Scriptures that preserve it, hold the normative place they do. Catholics should say that louder, not softer. But two texts strain against the one-generation frame from inside. First, 14:16: the Father will give another Paraclete "to be with you FOR EVER," language that most naturally reaches past one mortal generation toward the community Jesus is founding, though this verse alone does not settle the scope, and honesty says so. Second, and decisively wider, Jesus' own prayer minutes later: "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word" (17:20); Jesus explicitly extends the night's horizon past the room, to everyone downstream of apostolic preaching, which includes every person at your table. The honest remainder, named plainly: HOW the Spirit's ongoing guidance operates in the Church, teaching office and all, is a real and disputed question that these verses alone do not settle, and tonight will not pretend to settle it. What the verses do settle is the Gift himself: a Paraclete promised for ever, to a people wider than eleven, is

not a museum piece. He is an inheritance.

DIG DEEPER

1 John 2:1. If time allows: "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The word is parakletos. So the Christian has two Advocates on retainer: the Spirit within, pleading alongside us here, and the Son above, pleading for us there. Nobody in this room ever walks into court alone.

One Last Glimpse

Read Acts 1:4-5 aloud yourself, without introduction.

The risen Jesus, at table with them, charges them not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Father: "for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." Say only this, and then stop: they have the promise, and they even have the breath. And still he says: wait. Whatever is coming is bigger than a locked room. Next week we stop waiting.

Send: Closing Questions

1. The Spirit's job includes bringing to remembrance what Jesus said. What is one true thing you already know that you most need to be reminded of at the right moment?
2. Jesus said the Spirit makes his going away an advantage. Do you live like this is the advantage era, or like the good stuff happened two thousand years ago? What would change if you believed him?

Live It This Week

For every household, parent and candidate together. Once a day, before homework, before work, before the hard conversation, whichever moment needs it most, pray one sentence: "Come, Holy Spirit, Spirit of truth: teach me, and remind me." Six words of request from John 14:26, prayed at the moment of actual need. Compare notes once during the week: did anything come back to mind when you needed it?

Closing Prayer

Leader: *Lord Jesus, on the worst night of Your life You spent Your last hours promising us the Paraclete. You said You would not leave us orphans, and You have not. Breathe on us as You breathed on the Ten, and make us ready for the wind. Come, Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Scripture Memory Verse

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (John 14:26)

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 6, in order of use. RSV2CE.

- **John 14:15-17, 25-26** (Build, Scene One: another Paraclete; read at home this week as John 14:15-26)
- **John 16:13-14** (Build, Scene One: guide into all truth, optional add)
- **John 16:5-7** (Build, Scene One: to your advantage that I go away)
- **John 20:19-23** (Build, Scene Two: live discovery, the locked room)
- **John 17:20** (Push-Back answer: for those who believe through their word)
- **1 John 2:1** (Dig Deeper: Jesus our Advocate)
- **Acts 1:4-5** (One Last Glimpse: wait for the promise of the Father)

Catechism: CCC 692, 728, 729.

Voices: St. Augustine of Hippo (Tractates on the Gospel of John); St. Cyril of Alexandria (Commentary on the Gospel of John); St. Gregory the Great (Homilies on the Gospels, 30).

Distribute at the door: Take-Home 6, one per household.

Leader homework: reread the Thread Watch notes from Sessions 1-6 before next week. Session 7 is the summit; do not lead it cold.