



YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!
Spring 2018 Leader Commentary

Unit 2: The Whole Truth and Nothing but the Truth
Session 4: Expanding Jesus' Work (see pp. 132-135)

The Question: How is it possible to do greater works than Jesus?

The Point: Jesus assures us we can do greater works.

Background Passage: John 14:12-26

Focal Passage: John 14:12-21

This commentary is designed to help you think about the question, "How is it possible to do greater works than Jesus?" and drive home this one truth: Jesus assures us we can do greater works.

Focus on These Points

In the Name of Jesus
(John 14:12-14)

Interpreters have pondered what Jesus meant by telling His disciples they would do greater things than He, the Son of God, had done (v. 12). But perhaps the best way to understand the verse is to take it literally, exactly as Jesus said it. His earthly ministry was limited in time and space. He served the Father for about three years and never moved outside the boundaries of Palestine. But as the Book of Acts attests, the disciples in the early church carried out ministry that was greater in terms of geography, the number of people reached, and the lasting effect. We find a leadership principle here, as well. Whether it is parents speaking to their children, pastors speaking to their staffs, or teachers speaking to their followers, all of them should be able to say, "You have the potential to do greater things than I have done." Empowering and developing followers whose ministry exceeds the impact of their mentors follows the model of Jesus.

In John 14:13, we find one of the Bible's great prayer promises. Jesus answers prayer to bring glory to the Father. Our praying, therefore, ought to be directed toward that end. But we have to pause at the dramatic implications of words like "whatever you ask" and "ask me anything" (v. 14). What we see here is a New Testament formula for asking in the name of Jesus. It was something new to the disciples, but they would hear it again before Jesus finished His teaching.

Jesus' name is always connected in some way with our prayers, even if we do not speak those words. So, if we cannot ask for something in His name, we should not ask at all.

By the Power of the Spirit
(John 14:15-17)

Jesus declared that if the disciples loved Him they would do something. Jesus' major purpose in His final discourse with the disciples was to prepare them for His departure. In His absence their love for Him would be the sustaining motivation for loyalty to His teachings and devotion to the mission He gave them. Visible expressions of love for the Lord and for one another would give credibility to their witness. He explained to His disciples that people living in an obedient

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relationship to Him would experience the Holy Spirit's help. In this explanation Jesus noted the nature and role of the Holy Spirit. While indicating the relation between the Spirit and Himself, He also emphasized the Spirit's abiding presence with believers.

In response to Jesus' prayer, the Father would give them another Counselor. *Counselor* translates the Greek word made up of two terms that mean "alongside" and "to call." Thus, Jesus' word for the Spirit means one "called alongside of" or "called to one's aid."

The term (*paraclete*) was sometimes used to describe an attorney who was called alongside as an advocate to help a person in court. In another context *paraclete* might refer to a counselor who helps a person with confusion or a problem. The basic idea in *paraclete* is that of being a helper, with the circumstances surrounding the situation determining the exact nature of the help provided. Jesus was that kind of Helper. He met the demands of the moment for His disciples—helping their ignorance with His truth, their impotence with His power, their fear with His presence, and so forth.

Jesus had begun to speak to the disciples of His departure from them and His return to the Father (John 14:1-4). In verse 16 Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to the disciples and spoke of the Spirit's permanent presence. He would come to stay with them, abiding forever. The new truth promised the ongoing, pervasive, and permanent presence of the Spirit among believers.

The world (meaning "unbelievers" here) cannot accept the Spirit. Jesus gave two reasons for this. The world neither sees Him nor knows Him. Said another way, the world is unaware of the Spirit's activities and does not enter into a personal relationship with Him.

Commanded by the Father (John 14:18-21)

Only believers can enjoy the continued presence of God in their lives. Just as Jesus told the disciples that He would not leave them as orphans, we know God never abandons us. When did the disciples (later called the apostles) realize that Jesus was One with the Father and that they dwelt in Him? Did they have to wait for the second coming for that? Of course not.

Interpreters have debated the meaning of the words "on that day" (v. 20), although the context seems to point to the resurrection. So, because Christ has risen and the Spirit has come, Christians can truly know the truth of His relationship to the Father, and they can know that He dwells in them and they in Him.