

Men's Sunday Night Live
Lesson 17 - John 16:16-33
Finding Identity and Purpose
Let There be Joy

The disciples were greatly disturbed and discouraged because Jesus was going to leave them. They would exchange physical sight for spiritual insight. Today, believers “see Jesus” through the Spirit’s teaching of the Word of God.

Christ compares the events of His suffering to the birth of a child: labor is followed by joy. Isaiah 53:11 states, “*He shall see of the labor of His soul.*” The disciples did weep, but their sorrow was changed to joy. We today have sorrow and suffering; but when Christ returns, it will turn to joy. Christ gives the kind of joy that the world cannot take away.

“*In that day*” refers probably to the day when the Spirit would come and begin His ministry among them. While Jesus was on earth, the disciples were accustomed to taking their questions and needs to Him personally. When Jesus returned to heaven, He sent the Spirit to assist them in their praying (Rom. 8:26–27), and instructed them to pray to the Father personally. The model for Biblical praying is to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit. It will not be necessary for Jesus to beg the Father on our behalf, because the Father is willing to answer our requests.

Prayer is a tremendous privilege! Consider these other words of Jesus about prayer: John 14:13–14; 15:7; 15:16. As the believer allows the Spirit to teach him the Word, he grows in his prayer life, for prayer and the Word go together. Jude 20 commands us to “pray in the Holy Spirit.” Too much praying today is in the flesh, asking for things that are not in the will of God (See James 4:1–10). It is wonderful to allow the Holy Spirit to burden us with prayer requests. The Spirit knows the mind of the Father and can lead us to pray for those things God wants to give us. It has been said, that prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance, it is laying hold of His willingness.

The testimony of the disciples must have pleased Jesus’ heart, but He warned them of their coming failure. Even the Father would finally forsake Jesus on the cross! What a blessing to hear the Lord say, “*Be of good cheer!*” (vs. 33) He was about to be arrested and crucified, yet He gives peace and joy to His followers! He promises them His victory: “*I have overcome the world.*” (vs. 33) The Spirit has a special ministry in our lives. Are we allowing Him to have His way?

Read John Chapter 16:16-33 and answer the following questions

1. What did Jesus mean in John 16:16?
2. Why does Jesus refer to the sorrow of a woman in labor? (See 16:21)
3. A woman's labor gives birth to a new life. What does Jesus' death on the cross accomplish?
4. Why will "*no one*" take the joy of Jesus' resurrection from His disciples? (See 16:22)
5. What promise does Jesus give to the disciples? (See 16:23-24)
6. "*Ask and you will receive*" is one of the most abused phrases in the Bible today. Will the Father really give us "whatever" we ask in Jesus' name? (See 16:23)

7. Why do some preach today, “Ask and you shall receive earthly riches.”?

8. What happens to people who believe that? How about the preacher that preaches that?

9. What does Jesus mean by “*Again, I leave the world and go to the Father.*”? (See 16:28)

10. Why shouldn’t Christians be fearful or anxious at the possibility of persecution when Jesus is absent? (See 16:20-24, 32-33)

11. According to 16:33, what does the world have in store for believers? How has Jesus overcome the world?

A Women in Labor

John 16:21-22

An alternative to sorrow is “pain.” There were few options available to first century women for pain relief during labor. Since births took place at home, all of the disciples had probably heard a woman scream out in pain while giving birth.

As in most undeveloped countries today, childbearing in Biblical times was often fatal for the child, the mother, or both. Many pagan women sought help from their false gods, along with special charms, to protect them during pregnancy and delivery.

So, Jesus was using a graphic metaphor by comparing the coming “sorrow” of His followers with that of a woman in labor. He was indicating that their pain could not be avoided. But He did give them a hope. He promised that they would see Him again, and when they did, their joy would be as great as a woman whose healthy baby has been delivered.

Do you live with the hope of seeing Jesus, even as you confront the pain of this world?