

The Essentials of Disciple-Making
Session Five: Obedience—The Heart of Discipleship
Commentary

John 14:15-17

14:15–18. How do people know that they are Christians? How do you and I gain confidence that we are born again by the regenerating power of God’s Holy Spirit? The world cannot know because the world cannot accept the Holy Spirit. But the disciples were told that the Holy Spirit lives with you and will be in you. Pentecost was still in their future, so at the present time the Holy Spirit was constantly with them. But after Pentecost, he would actually be in them and in every other believer since that day. Consequently, they were identifiable (as we are) as God’s children, not orphans.

What did Jesus mean by the promise at the end of verse 18: I will come to you? Some interpreters suggest this refers to the resurrection while others see another promise of the second coming. But in the context of these verses, it surely means the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Jesus lives in us through the person and power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit lives in us to identify his children. The doctrine of the indwelling Holy Spirit does not rest completely on this passage, but verse 17 is of great significance.

This indwelling will be endless—the new Counselor will be with you forever. No orphans in the family of God, no abandoned people with no place to turn. The Holy Spirit will be a constant presence of Jesus with all believers.¹

1 Corinthians 10:23–11:1

10:23–11:1 This section concludes the train of thought that began in 8:1, summarizing the principle that believers should limit the exercise of their freedom (“knowledge,” 8:1) out of consideration for those who have weak consciences.

10:23–24 The overriding principle of 8:1–11:1 is to seek the good of the other person. Believers must conscript their actions with the aim of benefiting others, especially where this can lead to salvation for nonbelievers (cp. vv. 32–33). All believers should adopt limits on their rights and freedoms.

10:25–26 In what may seem a surprising twist, Paul said seeking “the good of the other person” (v. 24) meant a believer who objected to buying meat that had been sacrificed to idols should not interrogate the meat sellers in order to certify that the meat had no association with idolatry. Why? Most likely because such questions would seem hostile and alienate the nonbelieving Greeks at Corinth, thus hindering the gospel’s advance. Paul offered scriptural support for this position from Ps 24:1: “The earth is the Lord’s, and all that is in it.” Therefore, partake of the meat out of gratitude and a clear conscience.

¹ Kenneth O. Gangel, *John*, ed. Max Anders (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000).

10:27 The rule for eating in a pagan home is the same as in the meat market.

10:28–29a Paul prohibited eating meat if someone bothered explicitly to point out, “This is food from a sacrifice” (Gk *hierothutos*, “meat devoted to a divinity”). This rare Greek term was used by pagans to designate meat devoted to a particular god. In this situation, the food’s history did matter because the person who pointed it out (whether they be a nonbelieving Gentile or a Christian of weak conscience) apparently felt that a Christian eating such meat would be compromising his allegiance to Christ.

10:29b–30 After a parenthetical interruption that explains an exception to one’s freedom (vv. 28–29a), these rhetorical questions introduce the basis for the believers’ freedom to eat whatever is given them without questions of conscience.

10:31–33 People who wish to do everything for the glory of God cannot succeed if they act in disregard for others. Paul was always relinquishing his rights for the spiritual benefit of others—that they may be saved.

11:1 Paul’s admonition to imitate him was justified inasmuch as he was an apt imitator of Christ (4:16).²

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

13:1 If not accompanied by love, the ability to speak human or angelic tongues would be unbearable to others, like misused musical instruments.

13:2 Paul did have the gift of prophecy, he had great faith to the point of doing miracles, and as an apostle he was “manager” of God’s mysteries (4:1). His point here is that he could have these gifts to perfection and it would be pointless without love.

13:3 Sacrifice of one’s life (give over my body) can be the ultimate act of love (Jn 15:13; Rm 5:6–8), but it is also possible to make such sacrifice in order to boast rather than out of love. In this case, nothing is gained.³

² *CSB Study Bible*, ed. Edward Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

³ *CSB Study Bible*, ed. Edward Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).