

GOD'S GPS
John 16:12-15
Dr. Doyle Sager, First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Missouri
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One of the things that made Jesus such a great teacher was that he had a feel for how much his students could hold—in an hour, in a day, in a year or in three years. In vv. 12-13, he says he has so much he wants to give his disciples, but he knows they are maxed out, they can't hold anymore. Recognizing this, Jesus, in his earthly ministry, planted seeds which would lie dormant for a while. The Spirit will act as a time-released capsule, continuing to reveal truth to us.

“When the Spirit comes, he will guide you into all truth...” Think about how this truth impacts our understanding of the Bible. Have you ever had the experience of reading a Bible verse and suddenly seeing a blinding truth that grabs you? It's been there all along. But you weren't able to see it earlier. When we find ourselves confused, it probably is not because someone came and ripped out pages of our Bible. It's probably because we're not seeing what is already there.

These verses are an invitation to remain curious. Healthy followers of Christ are learners. They are not merely committed; they are also forever curious. To be only curious without any anchor is dangerous. To be committed without ever being curious is deadening. Charles Haddon Spurgeon once said, “Nobody ever outgrows Scripture; the book widens and deepens with our years.” I don't want to sound condescending or judgmental, but I feel sorry for people who never open the Bible.

“When the Spirit comes, he will guide you into all truth...” Consider how this truth impacts our search for God's will and in our faith formation. One of the mistakes we make in discussing the will of God is to assume it is ironclad. Think about the difference between an old-fashioned paper map and a GPS. A paper map is lifeless and does not talk back. But a guidance system on our phones or in our automobiles gives us the plan step by step. And if we make a wrong turn, we hear a voice saying, “recalibrating.” It starts with us where we are.

When the time is right, the Spirit will “guide” us. That word is from the same root in the Greek for “The Way,” the earliest description of our faith. A missionary once hired a guide to take him to a remote village. As they cut their way through the thicket, the missionary protested, “This can't be the way; there is no path.” The guide replied, “Out here, I am the way.” John 14:6. Our journey grows out of our relationship with Christ and our relationship with Christ grows out of our journey. Step by step. The Spirit will supply what we need as we need it.

“When the Spirit comes, he will guide you into all truth...” How does this promise enrich our faith formation? Maybe you're here this morning and you're standing outside the faith. You've not yet given your life to Christ because you're afraid you can't live up to it or you won't know what to do. Here is the promise. Step by step. Christ's Spirit will guide you. Think of other examples along the Jesus Way. When life feels empty and meaningless, the Spirit can shine a

light and fill us up with purpose. When we face a moral decision, a crossroads, the Spirit can show up and awaken desires to do the right thing. When we're afraid and the next step is so scary, the Spirit can whisper, "Yes!" And when we can't see how our little bit fits into God's big plan, the Spirit can take us up to 30,000 feet and let us catch a glimpse. "He will declare to you things that are to come" (v. 13). The Spirit has a relationship with the future and assures us it's all going to be OK [I am indebted to Dr. James Forbes, Jr., for the seed of this thought, *The Holy Spirit and Preaching*, p. 75].

"When the Spirit comes, he will guide you into all truth..." Ponder how this truth impacts the church's work. Let's not forget that Jesus spoke these words to the community of faith, to the church. The gospels were not intended for individuals, each in her corner, consuming private helpings of chicken soup for the soul. This is a word to the church.

Here is our church's mission statement. We welcome warmly, grow faithfully and serve generously, leading people into life-giving relationships with Christ and others. Now a question. What of that can happen without the Holy Spirit? Nothing. "When the Spirit comes, he will guide you into all truth..." Eugene Peterson warns us about a mistake every church makes. We start out right. We know we cannot save ourselves—it is what God does for us in Christ. But after that, we begin to organize as believers and tell God, "We've got it from here, God. And we begin to act as if church is about what we can do for God [*Pastor*, p. 117]. The Spirit will guide. Will we trust and follow?