

Corrective Lenses

The Holy Spirit Helps Us See Jesus

“Do You See Jesus” Series, March 14 & 15 (50th Anniversary) | John 16:4b-15

Rob O’Neal, Senior Pastor

Do your eyes need correcting?

Imagine a time when eyeglasses weren’t available.

If you couldn’t see at a distance, everything was just blurry. And as you aged, you gradually lost the ability to do things like read or thread a needle. There were no lenses; there was no correction. There were a few limited exceptions. The Inuit made sunglasses of walrus ivory. Roman Emperor Nero used a large, polished emerald to block the sun when he went to gladiatorial matches.¹ Swanky.

Monks pioneered corrective lenses as they copied Scripture.

Corrective lenses came on the scene in Northern Italy for the first time in the 13th century. Two magnifying glasses were riveted and held on the bridge of the nose by hand. Monks wore them while they worked. From there, lenses evolved and spread across Europe. By the twentieth century, eyeglasses were everywhere! They became a fashion statement.² Finally, people with less than perfect vision could see clearly!

The disciples in John 16 needed correction for their spiritual sight.

It was the night of Jesus’ betrayal, and the disciples were gathered with Him in the Upper Room. After a Last Supper together, Jesus comforted them and taught them a few final things before His crucifixion. In John chapter 16 he was asking the question, “Do you see Me?” The disciples didn’t see Him clearly. Not yet. They still missed the point of His mission and of much of what he said. They were missing information—there was still so much He wanted to tell them, but they weren’t ready to hear. Their spiritual eyesight was still blurry. But Jesus promised them the Holy Spirit, a Helper who would guide them into all Truth. He would become like a set of lenses that would correct their blurry spiritual eyesight.

We are all born with spiritual astigmatism.

You have astigmatism when one or both of your cornea or lenses is misshapen. Rather than being shaped like a sphere, the eye is shaped like a football, so light doesn’t focus in the right place. We’re all born spiritually blind; we can’t see God (Who is a spiritual reality). But even after Jesus opens our eyes, we still have that spiritual astigmatism. We see, but our sight is still blurry, still incomplete and misshapen by sin. We need corrective lenses to help us see clearly. I don’t know about you, but I really want to see clearly, so I want those lenses!

¹ <https://www.zennioptical.com/blog/history-eyeglasses/>

² Ibid.

The Holy Spirit brings Jesus and sin into focus.

The Trinity is a mystery no single set of lenses will fully clarify.

The Trinity: God is one being in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We see the Trinity in these verses. We see God the Father sending the Son and giving Him everything. We see the Son obeying His Father, going to His Father, sending the Holy Spirit, and speaking through the Holy Spirit. We see the Holy Spirit throughout this passage. But the Trinity is still a mystery. The corrective lenses of the Holy Spirit help us to see the Trinity. But to fully grasp the Trinity, it feels like we need a telescope; the Trinity is bigger than we can comprehend. And it feels like we need a microscope; there are details we just can't grasp. But the mystery of the Trinity is here on full display.

The Holy Spirit puts Jesus on center stage—where He belongs.

Jesus reminded the disciples that He was going away to His Father in Heaven. We know that's through the cross, resurrection, and ascension, even though the disciples didn't get it yet. Jesus reminded them that it would be to their advantage that He go. In **John 16:7** He says, "... for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you." The Holy Spirit continues and expands Jesus' work. Let's draw a distinction so you understand how:

Jesus is God with us in the flesh.

The Holy Spirit is God with us in our hearts.

The Holy Spirit brings us Jesus' message and points all the attention on Jesus. In **John 16:14** Jesus said, "He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you." The Holy Spirit points us to Jesus.

The Holy Spirit won't let the world ignore God.

Picture Jesus preaching across Galilee and Judea in the first century. He drew crowds. But His reach was limited. God the Holy Spirit takes that same Gospel message and brings it to everyone in the world—like a divine satellite system beaming a message into every human heart. That's what Jesus describes in **John 16:8**, "And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment ..." Jesus goes into more detail, and we could go into far more detail on these three verses. In fact, I've done that before. However, today I want to focus on the big picture: the Holy Spirit convicts the world of our need for God. The whole world receives the signal that the Holy Spirit is broadcasting, so that it's very difficult to ignore God. That's way more effective than just preaching in the hills of Galilee and Judea! Isn't that amazing to consider?

Studying God is like studying the heavens.

Imagine for just a moment that you are outside on a warm, starry night, staring up at the stars. You can see stars stretching from one end of the sky to the other. On a really dark night, you might see a couple thousand stars. But if you looked deeper with a powerful enough telescope, there are hundreds of billions of stars in our galaxy you could see and count, and they are vastly different from one another. And if you looked deeper still, you could see perhaps trillions of galaxies filled with marvels like black holes, quasars, and nebulae. The universe is so vast you could never see it all. Studying God is like studying those heavens. The deeper we look, the more we see. It is all amazing and beautiful! We will never see it all. Here, Jesus just gives us a glimpse—like we are learning for the first time that galaxies exist. He is letting us know that it is possible to know God! Now, we can spend

our lives and all eternity getting to know Him better. We will never know all there is to know about Him. He is simply too vast! But may our hearts long to know God more! And may God the Holy Spirit keep pointing us to the glory of Jesus Christ!

The Holy Spirit brought truth into focus for the Apostles.

That night, the Apostles couldn't bear everything Jesus had to say.

Jesus said it bluntly in **John 16:12**, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." For much of Jesus' ministry, the disciples didn't understand what He was saying. It turns out that there was so much more He could have said, so much more He needed to say. They were still not ready. But it still needed to be said. The Holy Spirit would step in.

The Spirit of Truth would complete the New Testament through the Apostles.

That's the hope Jesus laid out in **John 16:13**: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come." That means that God the Holy Spirit would tell the Apostles everything that Jesus had not said to them. The Holy Spirit would speak to the men who would write the New Testament. He would give them the words to write down so that we would know everything we need to know to follow Jesus. Including everything we need to know about the future and eternity. Isn't that amazing?

The deeper we look, God becomes ever richer but never different.

As God revealed Himself in the Bible, we learned more about Him, but He was always the same person. The loving God we meet in the Garden of Eden is the just God who gives the Law is the just King riding on the clouds in Revelation who judges the nations is the loving Savior who died on the cross and walks the streets of the New Jerusalem with us. We will never discover anything about God that will prove that He is not loving or not just. God doesn't speak through modern prophets to contradict or update the Bible. We will never disobey God by doing something like robbing someone and discover that God is no longer just and that it doesn't matter to Him. We will never go through a life-crisis like a divorce and discover that God is not loving and with us. Nothing we ever learn about God is going to contradict who we know Him to be. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and He has shown us accurately who He is in Jesus.

We sit under the Bible, not over it.

We don't rewrite the Bible. We don't toss out what we don't like. Sometimes we confess that we don't understand what the Bible says. But the Bible is God's revelation of Himself to us. We receive it. And we live by it.

The Holy Spirit conveys the fulness of God's provision to us.

There is no holding back with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus says in **John 16:15**, "All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you." Can you believe what Jesus just said? All that the Father has belongs to Jesus. And the Holy Spirit is going to take everything that Jesus has and declare it to us. The Holy Spirit helps

us grasp everything we need to know about God, and He fills us with the life of Heaven. Is that not astounding?

The Holy Spirit drives the “down arrow” in God’s Story.

Chapter one of God’s Story is Creation. A circle represents God creating the universe and us. Chapter two is Brokenness. A line represents the way we sinned and broke our relationship with God, the world, and ourselves. We broke everything, and we can’t fix it, even though we try. Chapter three is Jesus. Jesus died on the cross to pay the price for our sin so that we could be forgiven. He rose from the dead, victorious over sin, death, and evil. Chapter four is the Church. There is a down arrow. The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin and need for Jesus. The Holy Spirit reconciles us to God when we accept forgiveness. The Holy Spirit gives us new life, a new heart, and gifts for serving God. The Holy Spirit drives that down arrow that makes new things happen in us.

The Holy Spirit rouses the “up arrow” in your life.

The up arrow in this diagram is our response to God. We say “yes” to God. We serve Him, live holy lives, and invest in other people as we make more disciples. The Holy Spirit makes all that possible. When you know that, at one point in your life, you would spew a string of expletives at someone who hurt you, but you find yourself instead holding your tongue and using kind words, that’s the Holy Spirit working in you. When you use your gifts to work with children so that they can get to know God, that’s the Holy Spirit working in you. When you know that God is present with you and find yourself blown away with awe and wonder at how good God is, that’s the Holy Spirit working in you.

The Holy Spirit is speaking to you!

This definitely applies to you if you’re a disciple of Jesus already. But it also applies to you if you haven’t yet decided to follow Jesus. You’re here today. God the Holy Spirit probably prompted you to come. There is probably something inside your head or heart, even right now, that is saying to you, “I need that!” That’s the Holy Spirit convicting you of your need for Jesus. And beyond all the worries that you’re going to mess things up with God somehow, there is a thought that God might just love you and want to forgive you, make you new, make you His child, and fill you up with the life of heaven. That’s the Holy Spirit speaking to you! Say “yes” to the Holy Spirit today!

The Holy Spirit brings truth into focus when we open our own Bibles.

The Holy Spirit is our Bible Sherpa.

Sherpas help climbers on the tallest mountains in the world. They live in the area and know mountains like Mount Everest. They’re built to endure in the environment, and they know the route. So Sherpas help climbers by putting ropes and other equipment in place. They help carry gear and show the way.³ The Holy Spirit is like a Bible Sherpa for us. As we go to the Bible, the Holy Spirit comes with us. The Holy Spirit knows the terrain and helps us to find our way. The Holy Spirit points out things we need to see and keeps us safe. If studying the Bible has ever felt like climbing a mountain to you, then the Holy Spirit is your guide to the mountain.

³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/27130467>

The Spirit of Truth puts the plain sense of the Bible in plain sight.

I know that for many of you, the Bible can seem frightening, like climbing a really tall mountain. I know that you don't always trust yourself to know what the Bible says clearly. You're afraid of not knowing or getting something wrong, so it makes you afraid to just pick up a Bible, read, and study. But the Holy Spirit puts the plain sense of the Bible in plain sight. That means, you can trust your eyes! You may not see every nuance in the text. And years of study may help you to see more and more and to appreciate more and more. The truth is that you don't need a commentary or a class. The Holy Spirit gives you everything you need to read and study the Bible. And He corrects your vision so that your eyesight is clear.

I love new believers because they haven't forgotten that they can read the Bible themselves.

I've told you before about a new believer I started reading the Bible with. He was studying the Sermon on the Mount, and we got together to discuss what he had seen and heard. I expected him to say, "I just don't get it." But what he actually said is, "I think this is what it says ..." He was absolutely right. Then he added, "That makes me angry!" Or something like that. It still makes me laugh to think about that moment. But it also reminds me that the Holy Spirit puts the plain sense of the Bible in plain sight. We as Christians forget that fact and think we can't read it. But we can.

God speaks to me every day as I open my Bible.

Every morning, I wake up and head to the coffee pot. I read the headlines, then turn to my Bible. I have an app that I prefer. I start by reviewing the Bible verses I'm memorizing right now. Then I read a Psalm each day. Then I pick up studying where I left off the previous day. Right now, I'm studying the book of Genesis. I dig into the text and dissect it. Every day I come away with something God has said—something to celebrate about God, something I need to admit, something to ask God for, or something God is telling me to do. I hear the voice of God speaking to me every single day through the Bible. I want that for you! I want you to hear the Holy Spirit through the Bible and see how it can bless and change your life!

We are ROOTED in God's love and God's Word.

That's one of Valley's basic values. We put our roots deeply into God's love and Word. Those roots hold us and nourish us. That's also our history. As we celebrate our 50th Anniversary, know that this church was founded on a deep commitment to God and His Word. And that's who we are today. Will you pick up a Bible, read it, and study it this week? God the Holy Spirit will give you eyes so you can see what God has for you.