

Small Group Bible Study Questions

- A) It's amazing that we can be in the middle of a big crowd, part of a big family, even part of a growing church (of let's say, around 300?) -- and still feel very alone. There is something inside each of us which isn't satisfied exclusively with human contact. Our souls itch for more. Is the "itch" in our lives placed there and satisfied only by God, or will the "itch" depart through other means?
- B) What are some things in life which cause you to feel abandoned by God? Are there tragic moments in your personal history, times of faithlessness which you have experienced, large-scale tragedies which make no sense, periods of calm and peace where God just didn't seem real, etc., which have challenged your belief that "God with us" (remember Immanuel?) is really with you?
- C) Have you ever asked the same question as Judas in John 14:22? Have you ever wondered why God only discloses Himself to some people (those who love Him) and not to others (those who do not love Him)? Disclosure is something special in a relationship, it means more than simply allowing someone to know information about you, it means actually opening up and sharing a loving relationship with another person. Do you have someone who has disclosed themselves to you? Has God disclosed Himself to you?
- D) The great news of John 14:15-24 is that God chose to not leave any of His followers alone. He has given each believer in Jesus Christ the same Spirit which filled (John 3:34) Christ! This is amazing and radical news for each of us! God was not just "with" people during 'Bible times.' God is still, right now, with each of us. How does the actual "Spirit of God" who is alive in you (as a disciple of Jesus Christ), make a difference in the way you live? Take some time to pray with your fellow group members -- that the Spirit would have "full reign" in each of our lives -- and in all of Long Beach Alliance Church!

Peaceful Pandemonium

Long Beach Alliance Church • July 24th, 2005 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU; MY
PEACE I GIVE TO YOU; NOT AS THE
WORLD GIVES DO I GIVE TO YOU.
DO NOT LET YOUR HEART
BE TROUBLED, NOR LET
IT BE FEARFUL.
~JOHN 14:27 (NASB)**

1) A Heart Toward The Future

- A) Jesus sums up His teaching with His disciples by reminding them that He has remained ("abiding") with them (John 14:25). Don't miss that this is the starting point of ALL relationships with Jesus Christ, He must abide in you!
- B) Jesus has remained with His disciples, loving them and teaching them, despite their lack of understanding and love. Jesus' ministry is characterized as one of investment with the future in mind (14:28-29).

2) Help In The Future

- A) Jesus begins to explain the ministry which the Holy Spirit will have with the disciples, and subsequently, with all of those

in whom Jesus Christ "abides" (14:26-27, cf. John 15:1-11, teaching on abiding and fruitfulness).

- B) The first notable characteristic of the Spirit is that He is "Holy" (The Holy Spirit, τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον, the Spirit is pure, separate, true, good, right -- Holy). The most important thing about the Holy Spirit is His character (14:26).
- C) The Spirit is THE Teacher for Christians (14:26). There is God's Word (2nd Timothy 3:16), there are teachers (1st Corinthians 12:28-31), and there is family (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4; Titus 2:1-8) -- but in all of these, it is the Spirit of God which is our Teacher.
- D) The Spirit reminds us ("remembrance") of the teachings and the character of Jesus Christ (14:26). The disciples didn't "get" Jesus' teaching the first time around, but the Spirit would teach them so they would "believe" (14:29).

3) Hope For The Future

- A) Jesus provides peace (the customary Jewish greeting for hello and goodbye (. וְ שָׁלוֹם (shalom) or εἰρήνη in NT Greek), much like the Hawaiian "Aloha") through the Spirit (14:27).
- B) The peace of the Spirit is not just the absence of war or conflict, it is peace despite these circumstances. It is distinguished from the world as sustaining the Christian through times of trouble and fear (14:27).

4) Hell Is About To Break Loose

- A) Recalling the teaching from John 14:3 (I am going, but will come back again...), Jesus reminds His disciples of what they fear the most, His imminent departure (14:28).
- B) Clearly He is calling into question the substance of their love for Him (if you loved Me...). The subjective clause clearly indicates that the disciples are not loving Christ, and cannot share in the joy of His return to God the Father (14:28).
- C) True love recognizes that, for the Christian, to leave this world is to be in the presence of God the Father (cf. 2nd Corinthians 5:6-8). Death, while a great unknown, is conquered by love and loses its power over the Christian (cf. 1st Corinthians 15:54-55)!
- D) Jesus, speaking of His incarnate state of being in flesh, points to the most obvious reason for joy at the prospect of returning to the Father. He rejoices because, "the Father is greater than I[†]" (14:28).
- E) Jesus is telling His disciples all of these things (14:29) so they will believe/trust in Him. There is a sense of urgency, because "the ruler of the world" (Satan, cf. John 12:31) is coming to capture and destroy Jesus Christ (14:30).
- F) Satan "has nothing" on Jesus, a prediction that Satan's finest moment (the death of Christ), will be his great downfall (John 12:31). With that, Jesus and His disciples get up to go toward the Garden of Gethsemane (14:31), although they will not actually arrive there for a while longer (18:1).

† In what sense can it be said that the Father is greater than the Son? In the light of this statement, did the church overstate itself in claiming that Christ is co-essential with the Father? Is subordinationism, perhaps, right after all? Well, no...

It is important to note the context in which our Lord's words occur. It is the context of His humiliation, of His incarnation. G.C. Berkouwer (*The Person of Christ*) is on the right track when he comments, "This superiority of the Father, therefore, is broached in a particular context. It is the Son of Man in his humiliation who now proceeds by the way of suffering to the Father who will glorify him." In other words, modern criticism, just as that of the ancient Arians, ignores the contrast of the humiliation with His impending exaltation. Benjamin Warfield writes,

Obviously this means that there was a sense in which He had ceased to be equal with the Father, because of the humiliation of His present condition, and in so far as this humiliation involved entrance into a status lower than that which belonged to Him by nature. Precisely in what this humiliation consisted can only be gathered from the general implication of many statements. In it He was a "man": "a man who hath told you the truth, which I have heard from God" (viii. 40), where the contrast with "God" throws the assertion of humanity into emphasis (cf. x. 33) ... only one human characteristic was alien to Him: He was without sin: "the prince of the world," he declared, "hath nothing in me" (xiv. 30; cf. viii. 46). Clearly our Lord, as reported by John, knew Himself to be true God and true man in one indivisible person, the common subject of the qualities which belong to each (*The Person & Work Of Christ*, B.B. Warfield).

How shall we answer the question, then? There are two basic answers:

(1) First, it is said that the statement relates only to the humanity of our Lord. That is possible, but it is not the total answer, there is more...

(2) Second, the Son does not speak here of His essence, but of His office as the Mediator subordinate to the Father for a time (cf. 1 Cor. 15:20–28). The Father is greater in office and position, while the mediatorial work is in progress. And the use of the term, "Father," and not "God," confirms this. Jesus does not say, and it is significant to note it, "for God is greater than I." In the language of the kenosis of Philippians 2:5–11 He was a Servant for a time (cf. John 17:5). To put it in a statement: Absolute equality and relative inequality may co-exist for a time.

D.A. Carson comments,

One might even argue that for Jesus to utter such a thought, and expect to be taken seriously, presupposes the essential oneness between Jesus and his Father. If I were to say, rather solemnly, that God is greater than I, I would be dressing up truth in ridiculous clothing, because the distance between God and me is so great that the comparison is in some respects ludicrous even while it is formally true. It would be far more ludicrous than for a common, garden-variety slug to comment, "The human being who owns this garden is greater than I" (D.A. Carson, *The Farewell Discourse & Final Prayer of Jesus*).

The point is plain: It is proper to compare things or beings only when they are of the same species or essence.

The text of our Lord has primary reference to His status as the God-man accomplishing His mediatorial work. During this time He assumed the servant's place, and in that position the Father can be said to be "greater" than He. Leon Morris concurs, "The reference, however is not to Christ's essential Being, but rather to His incarnate state" (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According To John*, NICNT). (Selected portions from *The Emmaus Journal* (Emmaus Bible College), Summer 1995, *Peace! An Exposition of John 14:25-31* by S. Lewis Johnson, professor Emeritus in New Testament Exegesis @ Dallas Theological Seminary and Professor of Biblical & Systematic Theology @ Trinity Evangelical Divinity School)

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Figure 1



Figure 1 ~ On the night of his arrest, Jesus shared a last supper with his disciples. The Gospel writers specify that the meal was held in "a large upper room" of a house within the city (Mark 14:13, 15). This building marking the traditional site of the Last Supper is called the Cenacle, from the Latin word cenaculum used in Jerome's translation of this passage; the word means a dining room, and since such rooms in Roman homes usually were on the upper floor it also came to mean an upper room. The building stands on so-called Zion Hill at a point now south of the present city walls, but this area was inside the city at the time of Jesus. The upper story dates to a Crusader rebuilding of the traditional room of the Last Supper, but is also associated with the "upper room" where the disciples gathered after Jesus' ascension (Acts 1:13). This may mean that the room is also to be understood as the place where the Holy Spirit descended on the followers gathered together at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).

Since Jewish tradition placed the death of David at Pentecost (50 days after Passover), it may have seemed natural to early Christians to link together physically the two events associated with the same date on the calendar which were so symbolically juxtaposed. Pentecost, which marks in Jewish tradition the death of David, came in the Christian calendar to mark the birth of the Church founded by the living Son of David. (Even more important in Christian tradition, of course, was the fact that Pentecost was the Festival of the First Fruits of the Harvest. For Christians, what happened in this room on the Pentecost following this Passover marked the "first fruits" of God's final harvest.)

Figure 2

Figure 2 ~ This room, one of two built above the Jewish-Christian synagogue-church, has been shown to pilgrims ever since the Crusader period as the Cenacle (or Coenaculum), the Upper Room of the Gospel accounts. Following the expulsion of the Crusaders (12th - 13th Century) from the Holy Land, the building was converted into a mosque. The elaborately carved stone niche, midway along the south wall at the left, is a mihrab (place for prayer). The mihrab indicated the direction of prayer, toward Mecca, for Muslim worshippers.



Figure 3



Figure 3 ~ The Church of the Coenaculum. The Church of the Coenaculum on Jerusalem's western ridge is the traditional location of the Upper Room in which Jesus and his disciples ate the Last Supper (Matthew 26:17-35; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:39-46). According to tradition, the Last Supper took place in the larger room which stands adjacent to the one shown here, while this smaller room was where the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).

Figure 4

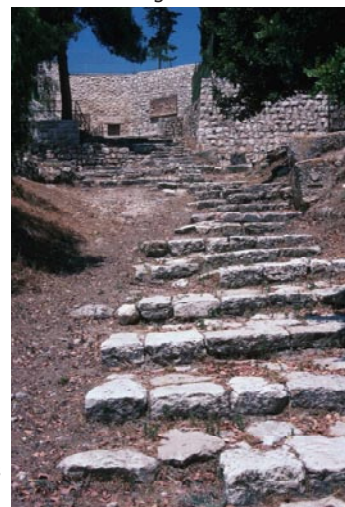


Figure 4 ~ Roman steps leading from the western ridge into the Tyropoean Valley. If the traditional site of the upper room, located in the Church of the Coenaculum on the western ridge, is correct, then Jesus would likely have descended these steps with his disciples as he made his way east toward the Garden of Gethsemane.

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