



# Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Let John Be John: Spirit vs. Ecstatic Experiences Bible

Bible Reading: John 16:5-15

**SUMMARY:** Often, we interpret John's depiction of the Spirit through the lens of Paul's spiritual gifts or of Luke's Pentecost narrative, resulting in distortion. It's crucial to realize that John's teaching sharply contrasts with both Paul and Luke; Paul's diverse spiritual gifts are absent, replaced by the unique gift of the Paraclete. Luke's concepts of 'filling,' 'pouring out,' & 'clothing' by the Spirit of Power find no mention; it's the Spirit of Truth in John's Gospel. To truly understand John's perspective, let's allow John to be John. At John's Pentecost, the Spirit manifests as Jesus' breath, unlike Luke's mighty wind and burning fire (Acts 2). The Paraclete is sent to teach, remind, testify, convict, glorify, and guide. The crucial question is: Are we are willing to be guided into all truth? John argues against ecstatic spiritual experiences; John's Jesus rejects the idea that heavenly ascent leads to visions of God. Instead, Jesus Christ alone descended to reveal God to humanity. Among the Gospels, John has the final word. Applying John's message means forsaking ecstatic experiences and embracing guidance from the Spirit of Truth.

### I. Let John Be John: John's Unique Perspective on the Spirit

•John's "concept of the Spirit differs considerably from the views of Paul & Luke..." — Jörg Frey

### II. Distinctives of John's Paraclete-Spirit

**A.** Spirit in John: Silences in the Text

**B.** The 'Paraclete'-Spirit

**C.** John's Five Paraclete Passages

1. "Another Paraclete" —like Jesus, the first Paraclete (14:16)
2. The Paraclete—the Teacher, teaching & reminding of Jesus' words (14:26-27)
3. The Paraclete —the Witness, testifying (Jn. 15:26-27)
4. The Paraclete—Advocate-Prosecutor, convicting the world (Jn. 16:7-8)
5. The Paraclete—the Guide of believers & Glorifier of Jesus (Jn. 16:13-14)

**D.** John's 'Pentecost' (Jn. 20:22) fulfills Jesus' Paraclete Promises

**E.** John's Pentecost' (20:22) & Luke's Pentecost (Acts 2) — the Same Event

**III. John's Paraclete-Spirit vs. Ecstatic Experiences of the Spirit**

A. Silence on Spiritual Gifts (tongues, etc.) & Ecstasy

•“Various gifts of the Spirit...recede...John focuses on one gift: revelation of the Father...” — Alan Culpepper

•“The 4th Gospel is silent on the ecstatic experience of the Spirit described...in 1 Corinth. 12.” —Gary Badcock

B. A Correction to Spirit-centered Communities?

C. The focus of the Paraclete-Spirit

**IV. John's Polemic rebuffs Mystical Visions of God (Jn. 3:13; 1:18)**

A. John's specific polemic regarding the Spirit

B. John's Polemic Against Mystical Ascent for Visions of God

C. Heavenly Journeys in the Ancient World

•“In the 1st century there existed ...Jews...interested in engaging in mystical ascent to God's throne... as reported in Ezekiel 1, Isaiah 6, Daniel 7...John is in dialogue with this form of Judaism, arguing that the... [mystic's] real goal is to 'see' God through Jesus...John 3:3, 3:5 & 3:13 are polemical sayings [making] the point that only Christ who is from above can bear witness to what he alone has seen above.” —April DeConick

D. 'Heavenly Tourism' Genre in Contemporary Christian Literature & Film

E. John: Jesus' descent vs. Mystical ascent

F. Union with Christ through 'abiding,' not via mystical ecstasy (Jn. 15)

G. Should Christians give credence to Heavenly Journeys? (Is. 6:1ff; Ezek. 1:1ff)

•“The [4th] evangelist 'stands strongly opposed to affirmations of ascent [to heaven], the granting of heavenly visions, & divine commissioning of anyone except Jesus' ...[He] is seeking to present Jesus to his readership as the only one who ascends to heaven & the one through whom revelation comes.” —John Stube

H. The Chariot-Throne replaced by Christ's Cross