



# Connect to the Mission

## Leader's Guide

### Week 5

*Topic: I Will Be With You Always*

**PREWORK:** Read the full leader's guide and watch the videos on the website. Note the time of the videos so you can plan well.

**Speaker:** Chuck McElroy

*Start script\*\*\*\**

The very last words Jesus says to His disciples before He ascends to heaven is "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20b). Then He physically leaves them to ascend to heaven.

So how is Jesus still with us? On the night of the Last Supper, Jesus says to the disciples, "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another [an Advocate] to be with you forever" (John 14:16). Like most of Jesus' teachings, the disciples do not clearly understand what Jesus is telling them at that moment. How will God still be with them after Jesus departs? But it does become clear in the book of Acts on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit powerfully fills the disciples and gives Peter the boldness to share the good news of Jesus. Yes, this is the same Peter that had denied Jesus out of fear a few weeks before in the scriptures.

Peter preaches, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off -- for all whom the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:38-39).

The Holy Spirit of God makes Himself known on Pentecost not only with the miracle of speaking in tongues but also in the message of Peter and in the hearts of the people: "Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day" (Acts 2:41). The day of Pentecost marks the beginning of God being with us and in us always and forever. The Spirit that created everything from nothing resides with us and in us when we accept Christ.

What does this mean for us? This miraculous news means that we have the Creator of the universe on our side, walking with us in our daily lives. With Christ as our bridge to salvation, God is not only with us, but His Spirit resides in us. He fulfills and heals our orphaned spirits and speaks to our hearts. When Jesus says the Holy Spirit is an advocate, He is helping us understand that not only is God a friend when in need, but He is also someone to give aid and stand on our behalf. When we know we have an advocate in our corner, it is much easier to take that first step of faith into an uncertain situation. No matter how independent and self-reliant we think we are, we were not meant to journey alone and with our own strength. The living God who parted the Red Sea, spoke the Earth into form, and created you wants to be with you in daily relationship -- just like He was in the beginning with Adam and Eve.

So, what is keeping us from living a Spirit-filled life of peace? What keeps us from having peaceful personal and work relationships, as well as purpose in our lives? One of the great obstacles to overcome is our own fear, whether it be realized or unseen. Fear of failure, fear of not being enough, fear of rejection. These anxieties can not only direct our relationships and work life but can seep into our worldview and spiritual journey. We forget that the Holy Spirit is with us. Every one of us has a unique life story, family life, and testimony to how God has brought us to Himself through Christ. But we still come to a new life in Christ with some of our old hang ups, triggers, and thought patterns that keep us from intentional discipleship and authentic relationships.

We need transformational power and the supernatural awareness that the Holy Spirit brings to conquer every fear. If we have faith like Paul, we can "...present [our] requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard [our] hearts and [our] minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:6b-7.) When our human minds and bodies get caught up in the "what ifs" and worst-case scenarios, the Holy Spirit will calm and bring clarity to the seemingly impossible situation. Our fears lie to us and separate us. The good news is that the Holy Spirit is the "Spirit of Truth" that will unify and restore us (John 16:13).

Even though Jesus, the prophets, angels, and Scriptures tell us that the Holy Spirit is with us always, it does not always feel that way. Sometimes we still feel alone and fearful. Sometimes we still experience doubt and isolation from the faith community. It does not mean that the Holy Spirit is not with us. It often means we have meandered away from the exercises that keep our hearts and eyes open and sensitive to the Holy Spirit. We want God to strike us with a bright light and loud voice from the sky to remind us that He is here with us. But the truth is, we are often so distracted with the urgency of our fears that we forget to remember the practices that remind us of the nearness of the Holy Spirit.

Just think in your own life, how has God spoken to you? We remember and experience God's presence through our personal worship time and reading the bible, prayer, and relationship in our small groups. We experience God through intentional time devoted to Him. Just like we devote time to any relationship that is important to us, we must devote time and attention to God and our spirit. When we stay close to the Holy Spirit, it is much easier to be imbued with the fruits of the Spirit that give us a fulfilled life, one with less fear and urgency. We experience a life of "...joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal 5:22). We will also be able to do the things that God asks because the power of the Holy Spirit is within us. It is truly a gift that the Holy Spirit is promised to be with us and in us forever.

Like the author of Hebrews said, "...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus..." (Hebrew 12:1-2a). We keep our eyes on Jesus through spiritual exercises and we acknowledge that this life is a team race with the Holy Spirit and our other faithful friends running alongside us to the end. When Jesus promised us the Holy Spirit, He promised us a relationship with Him and communion with others. Thank you, God, for the amazing gift of your presence!

Jesus is with us until "...the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20c). The God who spoke galaxies into being is within us and is constantly wooing us to see Him and His people for what they truly are, and not through our personalized filters of fear. We are already worthy, accepted, and have won because Jesus died for us, and His spirit is with us. When we connect to the mission of the One who created us and who knows our innermost being, we get a glimpse of heaven, a glimpse of our true selves. Living a life connected to Christ and His people does not mean we stop failing, suffering, or experiencing the consequences of this fallen world. It means we have someone who loves us and who is on our side, in our hearts, and is advocating for us. When we "Go," we are not alone. When we make disciples, God is with us. When we baptize, the Holy Spirit is in us and with us. Paul realized this when he proclaims, "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13). We can do anything, no matter what God asks, because we have the Holy Spirit with us and for us, to the end of the age.

*End Script\*\*\*\**

### **Tough questions prep:**

***I don't feel God is with me. How do I feel God's presence?***

"Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

Take intentional time to seek God's presence. It is often our schedule and our mind is so busy that we do not take a moment to let the physical world fall away to sit with just ourselves and God. Worship and prayer also reorient us towards seeking God.

***Jesus is with me but I am still not good at disciple making, baptizing, evangelizing, etc.***

“My power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

The mystery of God is that He uses us to transmit His love to others. Humans are fallen, mortal, and stumbling along trying to make it in this life. God built this paradox within us that when we are at our most weak and vulnerable, His love is able to shine brightest to those in need. So, no need for a silver tongue or extrovert personality; God uniquely wired you to reach the people He placed in your path. If we trust that God loves us and is with us, then we trust He also made us and can use our strengths and most often our weaknesses to change the world.

**Key Scriptures:**

**Matthew 28:20** Jesus said, “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

**Genesis 26:24** “Do not be afraid, for I am with you.”

**Deuteronomy 31:23** “Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the Israelites into the land I promised them on oath, and I myself will be with you.”

**Romans 8:28** And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

**Luke 9:23** Jesus said, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves, take up the cross daily and follow me.”

**Matthew 1:23** “...and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

**Hebrews 13:5** “For he said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you’”

## ***Class Timeline:***

	Estimated time
1. Introductions	15 min
2. Teaching Video	Chuck McElroy, 9 minutes
3. Discussion Questions	20 min
4. Testimonial Video	Kristen Finley, 5 minutes
5. Takeaways	10 min
6. Prayer	1 min
7. Invitation for next week	1 min

### **1. Introduce the content and video for this class (say in your own words):**

We have learned to connect to the Mission by going, making disciples, baptizing, and teaching others. We have begun to understand what Jesus says about who He is and who we are in Him.

God has invited us into a deep relationship with Him and others. But now we must learn to trust that God has a plan for our lives and that we can play a part in the redemption and reconciliation of all people back to God. We must always circle back and remember that Jesus is with us, and that gives us the power and backing to do everything He asks.

## **2. Play the teaching video.**

### **3. Discussion questions: (see page 22)**

1. How does it make you feel that the Holy Spirit is with you?
2. Describe when you felt the presence of the Holy Spirit during a difficult time.
3. What practice(s) could you add to help you experience and remember the Holy Spirit is with you?
4. Can you share a time when you did God's work with your own power/skills, and it did not go well? Or a time when you leaned on the Holy Spirit and you were amazed?
5. How is the Holy Spirit key to making disciples?

## **4. Play the short personal testimony video.**

### **Activity:**

If times allows: List various bible stories of very unlikely people who became an integral part of a plan for God to do a mighty work. How was God's Spirit upon them? (Abraham, Noah, Moses, Gideon, Daniel, Jesus, Paul)

### **5. Closing / takeaways in your own words:**

1. Jesus has promised to be with us forever through the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. We can overcome fears as an obstacle to anything when we lean on the presence of Christ.
3. We can experience the presence and power of the Holy Spirit by doing things that draw us near Him like personal worship and small groups.

### **6. Close in prayer Use the PRAY model as we teach them to pray:**

P = praise – praise God for who He is and what he has done. Use attributes to describe Him.

R = Repent – helps us confess any sins and change the way we think or feel

A = Ask – petition your request for this group to our Father in Heaven including their understanding of Jesus' mission

Y = Yield – Submit to God's will and let go of our will.

<b>PRAISE</b>	Matthew 6:9	"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.'"
<b>REPENT</b>	Matthew 6:12	"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."
<b>ASK</b>	Matthew 6:11&13	"Give us this day our daily bread."  "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]"
<b>YIELD</b>	Matthew 6:10	"Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven."

**7. Invite them back next week to learn about . . . . .**

The next week's topic, Matthew 4:19 and "the calls of Christ" upon our lives