

Fullness of Life

1. Warm-up question: What was your favorite Super Bowl commercial, or moment in the game, or pregame or halftime entertainer?
2. On Sunday we continued exploring the nature of the New Life that Jesus calls us to. We began with his warnings to anyone considering becoming a follower.
 - a. Jesus said, “If any want to become my follower, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” Matthew 16:24. What do you think “take up your cross” means? And what kind of “denial” do you think Jesus envisioned?
 - b. Jesus also said, “The gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. But the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life; and there are few who find it.” Matthew 7:13. What’s so hard about being on the road to life? What’s easy about being on the road to destruction?
 - c. When we walk with Jesus, he calls us to do many counterintuitive things, large and small. How we respond in those times is the real test of our discipleship. Tell us about a time when you felt Jesus calling you to do something you didn’t want to do. How did you respond? What happened?
3. If following Jesus is hard and often requires self-denial, an obvious question arises: why should I follow him? One possible answer is, “So I don’t end up in the wrong place in the life to come.” We’ll dig deeper into the subject of heaven and hell next week. But this week, let’s focus on our present life. Jeff suggested that the biggest, most incredible, amazing, and wonderful thing that happens to us when we experience the Second Birth and embrace New Life in Christ in the here and now is: the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38 says, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive *the gift of the Holy Spirit*.” Jesus elaborates on that in this week’s scripture. Read John 14 and 16, selected verses, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. In John 16:7, Jesus said, “It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.” Let the magnitude of that statement sink in. Jesus is saying that it’s actually better for us that he’s not physically present on earth right now with us. Why? What could possibly be better?
 - b. Suppose God gave us a choice: you can either have Jesus in a mortal body back on earth again or you can have the Holy Spirit. Which would you vote for – and why?
4. Jeff referred to the Holy Spirit as “Jesus distributed” or “Jesus crowdsourced.” He compared our pre-awakening state of being to an unplugged light and compared God to a distant plug in the wall. In that analogy, the Holy Spirit is the extension cord that

connects us (the light) to the presence and power of God (the wall plug). When that connection happens, there are three amazing benefits. ***First, the Holy Spirit plugged into me means I now have access to all the power of heaven.*** As Acts 1:8 says, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. . . .” That’s why Jesus said, “All things are possible for the one who believes.” Mark 9:33.

- a. But if we’re not living in that power – if we’re not living with an awareness of that power and consciously tapping into it – it does us no good. It’s like we’ve voluntarily turned off our light at the switch – we’re still connect to God’s power, but not using it. To illustrate the potential of the power available to us, Jeff reminded us of the example of Ruby Bridges. Her incredible courage was fueled by her faith in God’s power being right there with her. In your own life when has God enabled you to do something you thought you couldn’t?
 - b. When we find ourselves facing something where we’re tempted to say, “I can’t do it,” Jeff challenged us to get in the habit of repeating this mantra, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13. What’s something you’re facing right now where you’re tempted to say, “I can’t do this”? Are you ready to challenge it in the power of Spirit of Christ within you?
5. ***Second, the Holy Spirit plugged into me means now I’ll never be alone.*** The Holy Spirit – Jesus distributed – is now ever present with his followers. That’s what Jesus meant when he said, “I will not leave you orphaned,” John 14:18, and when he said, “Remember, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:20.
- a. Do you feel the presence of Jesus in your daily life? If so, how would you explain to someone else what that feels like and how it benefits you?
 - b. The famous writings of Brother Lawrence are entitled, “The Practice of the Presence of God.” What do you think it means to “practice” the presence of God? What might that look like?
 - c. Tell us about a time when you appeared to be all alone from a human perspective, but you had a strong sense of the presence and comfort of Christ there with you.
6. ***Third, the Holy Spirit plugged into me means I have access to supernatural guidance in my life.*** It’s what Jesus meant when he said, “My sheep hear my voice.” John 10:27. Jesus promised, through the Holy Spirit, to speak guidance into our lives.
- a. Tuning into that voice of guidance is what the Bible means when it says, “Pray without ceasing.” I Thessalonians 5:16. In other words, live with your heart constantly tuned and listening for God’s quiet voice guiding you. What are some practical ways we can get better at doing that?
 - b. Tell us about a time the Holy Spirit’s voice guided you in a way that you deeply appreciate. What happened?

John 14:2-26, selected verses

2 I go to prepare a place for you. 18 But I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. 19 In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live.

15 If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever. 17 This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

25 I have said these things to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.

John 16:7-14, selected verses

7 I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

12 I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. 14 He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you.