

What's Next?

We're getting near the end of our series called "Experiencing Jesus at a Deeper Level." On Sunday, we explored the final instructions Jesus gave us for how to live well in our current era of spiritual history.

1. Warm-up Question: If you won a huge lottery jackpot, what would you do next?
2. Jesus' resurrection felt like the spiritual equivalent of winning the lottery; it was an epic triumph that changed everything. So naturally, the disciples asked Jesus, "What now? What's next?" His answer surprised them. Read Acts 1:1-11.
 - a. Note verse 6. There the disciples ask, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" What does this question tell us about what the disciples expected would happen next? Describe what they seemed to be envisioning as the next phase of human history.
 - b. What does verse 7 mean?
3. After deflecting the question about when his kingdom would be established, Jesus gave the disciples a two-part formula for what they were supposed to do next. In verse 8, he says, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses. . . ." First let's examine the part that says: **You will receive power!**
 - a. Jesus indicates that the source of this power will be the Holy Spirit. The term "Holy Spirit" refers to the unseen power of God all around us. Do you believe the power of God is all around us just waiting to break out? Tell us about a time you've witnessed the power of God working in wonderful ways.
 - b. In verse 5, Jesus says that, to access the power of the Holy Spirit, we must be "baptized with the Holy Spirit." The key Greek word here is baptizo (bap-TEED-zo], which means "to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge, to get fully wet." Given this definition, what do you think it means to be baptized in the Holy Spirit?
4. If being soaked in the Holy Spirit is how we access the power Jesus promised, the critical question becomes: What kinds of things can I do to soak myself in the Spirit? Perhaps the best way to answer this question is to explore what the first disciples did to soak themselves in the Spirit. Read Acts 1:12-14 and Acts 2:1-8.
 - a. According to Acts 1-2, the disciples spent a period of about 40 days gathering regularly in the upper room praying (1:14), discussing the scriptures (1:15-20), and worshipping, until they were filled to overflowing with the Spirit (2:1-4). What do you imagine it felt like to them when they were filled with the Holy Spirit?

- b. How do you know when you're filled? How would you describe it?
5. Jeff invited us to picture our souls as being like an overworked, dried, shriveled sponge. Life's stressors leave us drained, dried, and brittle – good for nothing. But when a sponge is re-baptized (submerged in water), it emerges refreshed, renewed, and ready to function well again. The same thing happens when we soak in the Spirit. Here's a list of several spiritual practices that allow us to soak in the Spirit:

Prayer	Listening to beautiful worship music
Meditating on Scripture	Fellowship w/ Spirit-filled people
Weekly worship	Acts of service
	Acts of giving/generosity

- a. What kinds of things best allow you to feel the presence of God and soak it up?
- b. The story of David Hanson reminds us that a rhythm of weekly worship seems to have a special power to soak us in the Spirit. Hanson told how his father would quietly weep during worship songs after his sister's diagnosis with a deadly disease and how, later in life, Hanson's wife did the same when she was struggling with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. Something mystical happens in group worship. Why do you think that is? What's going on there?
- c. Does your current routine pattern of spiritual practices feel sufficient to keep your soul soaked in the Spirit? If not, how might you tweak your pattern to keep your soul soaked?
6. When we receive power from the Holy Spirit, we're then ready for the second part of Jesus' formula: **You will be my witnesses!** When people experience God's presence and power at work within us, they want to know, "How can I get what you have?"
- a. When you're soaked in the Spirit, how does it change your behavior at work?
- b. When you're soaked in the Spirit, how does it change your behavior with family and friends?
- c. When you're soaked in the Spirit, how does it change your response to situations that are stressful and overwhelming?
- d. When we find ourselves in the heat of the moment, feeling stressed, Jeff suggested we practice a simple "soaking" ritual. Stop, repeat to yourself "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13), take a deep breath, then lift your hands and envision the peace and power flowing into you. Have you ever tried something like this? Do you think it might help?
- e. In John 7:38, Jesus says, "The one who believes in me, out of his belly [or her belly] shall flow rivers of living water." Given all we've discussed, what do you think that means?