

- One of the things I heard this week is that it is wonderful when God speaks, but we wish that it happened more often.
 - There is a sense that God is speaking, and when we hear and lean in it is amazing, but that it is far too infrequent.
 - How do I develop a life where the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit is more the rule than the exception?
 - When I was younger, we went camping a lot. We preferred tent camping. Show up and pitch your tent. Liked isolated sites where we had privacy. Either buy or bring wood. Make fires, cook over the fire, smell like smoke, hope to not be rained on, sleep on the ground, and only get fully clean when you got home to shower. It was great.
 - We learned that the problem with isolated campsites do not have access to water. You would go across the camp to the pump. Fill your water, take it back.
 - You would learn that you needed to look for sites closer to the water
 - But I also remember being on a missions trip in Alps. Water was right there. River ran through the camp. It was cold, fresh. Hard to bath in it, but it kept your drinks cold. Right there.
 - Carrying water a long ways. Having water right near. Being almost in the water.
 - Think of the Holy Spirit as a river. Always flowing. Always available. Thirst quenching, totally satisfying, for everything.
 - How do we move from living on the bank, in the woods, going down to the river occasionally to get some water, to dip our toes in, to standing in the middle of the river, with it rushing around us all the time?
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- Spiritual complacency is common in comfortable societies.
 - It is easy to get used to a little bit of God's presence and letting that carry us for long periods of time. It is common for the comforts available to us to lull us into a kind of shallow spirituality.
 - We want to **CULTIVATE THE SPIRIT'S PRESENCE**
 - There is God's omnipresence – always there all the time. When you are at your sinful worst and when you engage in your most sacrificial behavior
 - Manifest presence – like Elijah and the prophets of Baal. It's awesome but we can't make God manifest his presence. We can pursue him but cannot produce it.
 - Cultivated presence – a developed awareness of the Spirit's presence. We are not manufacturing a sense of God's presence or simply pretending.
 - We desire to find God wherever life finds us.
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- History lesson on the Spirit
 - The Israelites in the OT struggled to follow God.
 - Right from the time they left Egypt, the story was the same.
 - They would come out of the gate well. A leader would encourage them to follow God and his ways.
 - They would do so for a while, but then their attention would be grabbed by other things.
 - They would get caught up in living life, seeing what the world around them had, and they would wander further and further from God.
 - God would allow them to suffer the consequences of their decisions. They would get into trouble, life would start to unravel and fall apart, and all of a sudden, they would come back to God. They would beg for him to intervene. God would often intervene in miraculous ways. The Spirit would move powerfully. He would forgive them and the cycle would start all over again.

- As time passed, the people began to ignore God's invitation to come back to him.
- God sent prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah, Elisha) to warn the nation. If you read through these prophets, much of it is God forcefully inviting the Israelites away from their sin and selfish living and back to himself.
- There is a recurring picture that comes through over and over as God speaks to this nation of people.

Jeremiah 2:13 "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

- Two problems.
- First, they walked away from the river. They walked away from the river of God's presence and his blessing. They thought they knew better. That it was not worth staying close to God. So they marched in the opposite direction.
- Second, they substituted other things in place of this. They dug cisterns in the ground that leaked, that could not hold water,
- They did what they wanted, what seemed right to them, and lived far from the river.
- So God promised them a new covenant. A covenant marked by the blood of his Son and by His Spirit living in this people.

Ezekiel 36:26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

- Fast forward 500 years. Jesus connected these prophecies and pictures of the river of God's presence to the coming of the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus attended a Jewish feast called the Feast of Tabernacles. The feast went for multiple days.
- It is less than a year before he died. He was surrounded by those who opposed him and wanted him arrested or killed.

John 7:37 On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." 39 By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

- This was not some casual thing. He made this invitation in a "loud voice". Meant to call out. Like a loud raven's call. Said so everyone could hear.
- This was important.
- Jesus promises a life full of the Spirit.
- A life where the Spirit speaks, where he moves in power, where our deepest thirsts are satisfied. But it is a promise with a condition.

I. Identify your thirst.

John 7:37 On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.

- "Anyone who is thirsty."
- To thirst is to suffer a real longing for. Not a casual thirst. Eagerly long for.
- Have you ever been really, really thirsty?
- Before you can have your thirst filled, you must actually know that you are thirsty. You must recognize that you have a need. If you don't recognize your thirst, you won't seek a drink.
- We run into one of two problems.
- 1) We don't believe we are thirsty.

- There have been times that I have spent a day at the shore, or perhaps in someone's pool. We spent the day just hanging out, enjoying myself. Got to the end of the day, and I am not feeling quite right. I feel hungry but that's not right – I had two burgers and enough potato salad to last for months.
- Then I took a drink of water and realized how thirsty I was. Up until then, I didn't even know I really needed it.
- We can go through life thinking that we are good. We have what we need. Life is adequate.
- Sooner or later we recognize that we have a need. We are thirsty.
- 2) We fill up the thirst with something that doesn't satisfy.
- LIKE drinking soda when what is desperately needed is water. We can even forget we need water.
- You cannot fill a spiritual hunger with a physical solution. They actually do the opposite and dull our spiritual hunger and anesthetize us.
- Sometimes we fill that spiritual desire with sinful things like drinking too much, drugs, pornography. It's obvious we are not living in the river.
- Often not sinful things:
- Busyness: Check email. Get productive. We clean up. We pick up a professional journal.
- People: Friends, Cyber friends. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat.
- Food, shopping.
- We go to them so frequently when the hunger strikes that they become addictions and they never satisfy.
- We must learn to recognize the things we run to when the desire for God strikes us.
- What competes with the Spirit's call to draw near?
- What should we do instead? Embrace the empty feeling and run to the river of life where everything lives.
- If we are going to **CULTIVATE THE SPIRIT'S PRESENCE**, we must learn to look at what is going on in our hearts. To recognize our thirst for the Spirit for what it is.

II. Come and drink.

John 7:37 On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."

- We've already see that there are many things to distract. Many things for our hearts to become attached to.
- We have a greedy, eager, restless longing.
- Filled with stuff – example of the car that is new but gets dinged, no longer smells new.
- Pleasure – sexual exploits, drugs, alcohol. The good feelings don't last, crave more.
- The soul constantly cries out for more. We crave more.
- In order to **CULTIVATE THE SPIRIT'S PRESENCE**, we are invited to come and drink.
- Jesus elaborates and clarifies this statement.
- Whoever believes in me. Believe is to entrust, to place our confidence in. This is not intellectual. It is living as though the what Jesus says is actually true. It is taking Jesus at his word in every area of my life and adjusting to that truth.
- Believing truth in our heads but not acting on it is like coming but not drinking. We come to Jesus, we get the water, and then we simply hold onto it.
- Doesn't do us any good to have the water in our hands and then not to drink.
- How do we come and drink?
- These are descriptive, not prescriptive.

- Meditating on Scripture
- Read it. Think about it.
- This is not a checklist – if something grabs your attention, stop. Ask questions.
- *“Every time you pick up the Bible, you are one Holy Spirit breath away from a God encounter, from a life-giving interaction with the Author of Life.”* (Rob Reimer)
- Worship and thanksgiving
- Consider what God has done. I listen to music. Playlists that change. They direct me thoughts towards God and he speaks to me.
- Praying scripture
- This works especially good with Psalms for me, but can be anything. If you read something in Scripture, use it to pray. Something that resonates with your own life and then pray it back to him. Helps us process raw emotions and feelings with God.
- Silence and Solitude
- We talked about this a couple of weeks ago. Practice mini retreats
- Cultivate a quiet, unhurried soul in a noisy, busy world
- Busyness can mask our soul’s emptiness.
- God calls us out of our busyness into divine inactivity. Purposeful inactivity. Human inactivity is often escapism. Divine inactivity is restful, reparative and restorative.
- Listening prayer
- Just listen. Write down what you think and hear.
- These things are sometimes referred to as Spiritual disciplines – they are not the end in themselves, but a means to an end.
- The purpose of reading the bible is not to know your bible. The purpose of reading bible is to know God.
- We can read the bible and never encounter God. We can pray and not meet God in prayer. We can go to church and never change.
- Don’t confuse doing religious activities with experiencing God’s presence. They aren’t the same. If we miss this, we become religious and miss out on God’s presence.
- Engage in disciplines that feed your soul and increase your awareness of his presence – everyone is wired differently.
- Commit to disciplines that get you into the river of God’s presence. Need to figure out your spiritual disciplines – they may change over time. You can look a new things, new ways, or go back to older ones. Try many.
- But whatever it is, put God on your calendar. Make that pursuit non-negotiable.
- When you find yourself getting out of the river, make an appointment to get back in.
- Sometimes it is not until you drink that you find out how thirsty you are – then you want more. **CULTIVATE THE SPIRIT’S PRESENCE.**

III. Let the Spirit steer you to the river.

7:38 Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” 39 By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

- This is God’s promise.
- When we pursue his presence. When we lean in. When we make him the priority, he leads us to the middle of the river.
- The picture of a river means abundance. No lack.
- River means constancy. It is flowing always.
- One of the traditions at the feast Jesus was at was *“the pouring out of water.”*

- They would take a golden vessel of water from the pool of Siloam, bring it into the temple to the altar and pour it out before the Lord in a joyful ceremony. It remembered when Moses hit the stone to get fresh water for the Israelites when they came out of Egypt.
- Perhaps Jesus said what he did then, perhaps not, but the illustration is clear. It doesn't need to just be a little bit of the Spirit. We can live in the center of it.
- Learn to recognize God's presence.
- Those still small voices that we hear that change us.
- The joy we wake up to even though our circumstances have not changed.
- The overwhelming compassion and love for someone.
- We are developing spiritual sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's activity in our lives.
- This is developed consciously over time.
- We must develop it, sharpen it, grow it, heighten it.
- If God moves you to expand your comfort zone, go with it. We often confuse our comfort zone with discernment.

- **CULTIVATE THE SPIRIT'S PRESENCE.**

- When we do, we can live in the river. We can hear his voice. We can experience his power and boldness for life.
- Most life change occurs alone with God. When we **CULTIVATE THE SPIRIT'S PRESENCE** we encounter God. It is hard to authentically encounter the living God and remain as you were.
- Learn to identify your thirst for God for what it is.
- Come and drink. Pursue his presence.
- And let the Spirit continually steer you back into the river of his presence.
- Then our prayer can be like David.

Psalm 63:1 You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water. 2 I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. 3 Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. 4 I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. 5 I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you. 6 On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. 7 Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. 8 I cling to you; your right hand upholds me.

- Amen!