



▶ DAILY DEVOTIONAL.

Saturday/Sunday, 6/23-24/18

“Words to Fill and Fulfill”

Acts 19:1-7

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”

They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?”

“John’s baptism,” they replied.

Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all.

Family Activity: The Holy Spirit gives us gifts that we get to experience firsthand. Read together Galatians 5:22-23. Take time to write or draw a collage of the fruits of the Holy Spirit listed in Galatians. Keep your collage on your refrigerator or somewhere that you will see it regularly this week.

Discuss:

How have I experienced the fruit of the Holy Spirit?

What fruit would I like to pray to receive more of this week?

Monday, 6/25/18

“Holy Spirit Descent”

Matthew 3:13-17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”

Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

- It can sometimes come as a shock to us to think about Jesus being baptized. I suppose it's the same shock John felt when Jesus asked to be baptized by him. Typically, we think of baptism as the washing away of our sin. It certainly is that for us in a secondary sense, but we learn from Jesus' baptism what baptism is primarily about. It is about identity. Jesus descended into the water, emerged, the Holy Spirit descended, and God announced to the world for the first time who Jesus is: He is God's Son, the Messiah. The passage from Acts 19 this past weekend tells of how some of the early disciples were baptized in Jesus and, in that, received the fullness of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit established and confirmed their identity as a child of God, and then empowered them to live into that identity. What would you consider to be your primary identity? What does it mean for "child of God" to be your primary identity? How does this identity affect how you live and interact with others?
- Jesus' baptism was one of descent. Jesus humbled himself to be baptized to reveal his identity to us. To do that, he descended into the same waters where sinners were to be found. His whole life and ministry would be like this. In our baptism, we are called to the same life and ministry: humbling ourselves, ministering to those who are considered "low," or "sinners," and witnessing to the love and mercy of Jesus in those depths. This is part of our calling as baptized followers of Jesus. The good news is that the Holy Spirit helps, guides, leads, teaches, empowers and enables us in this ministry. What does it mean to be a minister? How does it affect you to see yourself as a Holy Spirit-empowered minister for Jesus? In what "low" places, and with what "low" people can you minister to, to share the great love and mercy of God?

Prayer: Holy God, thank you for descending amongst us sinners. Thank you for claiming us as your children. Enable, empower, and embolden us by your Holy Spirit to go where you go as ministers of your amazing mercy and love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, 6/26/18

"Filled With the Spirit"

Acts 9:17

Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord — Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here — has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

- Saul, who would soon have his name changed to Paul, had just encountered Jesus while travelling on the road to Damascus, and was blinded. Saul had been persecuting Jesus' followers, and so God chose to intervene. Ananias was approached by God in a vision and told to go to where Saul was to lay hands on him and heal him. So he does, and upon laying hands on him, Saul's vision was restored and he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Saul experienced a complete conversion, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and would go on to be largely responsible for the spreading of the Good News of Jesus from Jerusalem to Rome. What do you think it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Who is someone you would describe as being filled with the Holy Spirit? What is it about them that causes you to think that?
- As is clear from Saul/Paul's story, our being filled with the Holy Spirit is not for our benefit, but for the benefit of the people and the world around us as a witness to God's presence and work. Where do you see the presence and work of the Holy Spirit around you?

Prayer: Holy God, thank you for sending your Spirit as a witness to your presence and power. Give us the eyes to see you at work all around us, and give us the hearts to join in. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday, 6/27/18

“Bearing Fruit”

Galatians 5:22-25

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

- I love trees. It may sound kind of strange, but trees are amazing living organisms. I love their beauty, their incredible diversity, their quiet and noble stature, and the life that they bring. I grew up wanting to know as much as possible about the various trees native to Missouri, and especially how to identify them. There are many ways to identify a tree: by the leaves, the bark, the grain of the wood, even in some cases by smell. One of the easiest ways to identify a tree, however, is by the seeds or fruit it produces. One can know exactly what it is by the fruit it bears. It is the same when talking about life in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit's presence in someone's life is identifiable primarily through the fruit they produce. The fruit that is listed in Galatians is the singular fruit we exhibit when living a life in the Spirit. Singular, because we don't get to pick which ones we will live into and which ones we will forgo. Paul is saying that someone living life in the Spirit looks like this. In what ways do you see the fruit of the Spirit being exhibited in your life? In what ways do you see it exhibited in the lives of those around you?
- What do you think Paul means by saying that against such fruit there is no law? What do you think Paul means by keeping in step with the Spirit?

Prayer: Holy God, thank you for your work in our lives. We ask that you take over our hearts and enable us to bear fruit worthy of your Spirit. Help this to be our witness to the world of your great love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday, 6/28/18

“Rooted in Love”

Ephesians 3:16-19

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

- The author of Ephesians offers this as a prayer on behalf of the church there in Ephesus. The author prays for the strengthening of the Holy Spirit in faith and love; a love that is beyond human knowledge or comprehension. What do you think it means for Christ to dwell in your heart? Does Christ dwell in your heart? What are the effects of Christ dwelling in your heart?

- Spend some time thinking about and meditating on Jesus, as revealed in scripture. What is the extent of God's love shown through Jesus? Have you experienced the full extent of God's love? What is that like?

Prayer: May this prayer in Ephesians be our prayer today:

We pray that out of God's glorious riches he may strengthen us with power through his Spirit in our inner beings, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith. And I pray that we, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that we may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, 6/29/18

“Spirit-Empowered Praise”

Psalm 145:8-13

*The LORD is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.*

*The LORD is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.*

*All your works praise you, LORD;
your faithful people extol you.*

*They tell of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might,
so that all people may know of your mighty acts
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.*

*Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures through all generations.*

- Sometimes it is good to dwell in the presence of God and simply sing his praises. The Holy Spirit prompts us and helps us in this. What praise would you like to offer up to God today? What are some of the ways that God has been gracious and compassionate with you recently? How have you, most recently, experienced God's goodness and love?

Prayer: Spend some time in praise of God today, and allow this psalm to guide you in prayer.

***This week's devotions were written by
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