



Week 1: “Beyond Ordinary” Message Series (Leader Guide)

The Big Picture:

God calls us to “live by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16) and in the July weekend message series we will unpack what it means to live a Spirit-directed life. The extraordinary work of the Holy Spirit should be a normal experience in the life of a Christ follower. As each of us is convicted, filled, and gifted by the Holy Spirit, we will find ourselves empowered to live lives that are beyond ordinary.

Discussion:

What is your understanding of the phrase “filled with the Holy Spirit”?

The Word: Read Acts 2:1-21

Propheied: Peter recited prophecy from Joel to explain what was happening on the day of Pentecost. Joel was one of many prophets to anticipate the coming Spirit. What did Ezekiel say about the coming Spirit in Ezekiel 36:25-27?

Leader Notes: The Spirit has always been present in our Triune God. Under the Old Covenant the Spirit was given for seasons of empowering. But here Ezekiel anticipates something new that will happen when God pours out his Spirit on all of his people, giving them the will to follow God wholeheartedly. There is a promise of a new and clean heart, and the Spirit residing within to move the child of God to do his will. (See also Ezekiel 11:19-20 & Jeremiah 31:31-34.)

Prepared: Jesus, too, prepared his followers for the coming of the Spirit. According to John 14:16-20, who is the Spirit of truth?

Leader Notes: “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you” (John 14:18-20). The Spirit of truth is the Spirit of Jesus! Jesus promises his disciples that he will not abandon them, but will come back to them and live in them. The living Jesus will continue to be with them in the presence of his Spirit – “for he lives with you and will be in you” (verse 17).

Proclaimed: On the day of Pentecost Peter proclaimed the arrival of the Holy Spirit. Compare Acts 2:13-15 with Ephesians 5:18. Why do you think the filling of the Spirit is compared to drinking wine?

Leader Notes: While the presence of the Spirit is given once to the genuine believer, Paul indicates in the Ephesians passage that the filling of the Spirit is ongoing. The contrast between being filled with wine and being filled with the Spirit demonstrates that one can be under the influence of whatever is filling a person’s life.

Practiced: Romans 8:1-17 gives a wonderful description of the Spirit-filled life. Looking especially at verses 5-6, what characterizes a person who is filled & controlled by the Spirit?

Leader Notes: Romans 8 describes a life that is filled and controlled by the Spirit. The controlling influence of the Spirit is life-giving (v. 2); makes righteousness possible (v. 4); fills the believer’s mind with the Spirit’s own desires (v.5), and with life and peace (v. 6); and assures the believer of his or her position as a child of God (verses 15-17). “Life” is mentioned repeatedly as a sign of the Spirit-controlled life (see verses 2, 6, 10, 11, & 13.) This joy-filled, abundant life can be the norm for the believer who lives by the Spirit.

Living it Out:

Read all of Romans 8:1-17 and highlight every phrase that describes the Spirit-filled life.

Prayer:

Use the June/July Pray & Watch prayer guide to guide your prayer time (available in the brochure racks and online under "resources").

Memorize This Week:

Romans 8:11 (NIV) And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

Prepare for Next Week:

Read "A Point of View" and spend some time thinking about Tozer's perspective. Consider the question: Do I have a "lifelong habit of spiritual response"?

A Point of View: “The Pursuit of God”

by A. W. Tozer

The Presence and the *manifestation* of the Presence are not the same. There can be the one without the other. God is here when we are wholly unaware of it. He is *manifest* only when and as we are aware of His presence. On our part, there must be surrender to the Spirit of God, for His work is to show us the Father and the Son. If we cooperate with Him in loving obedience, God will manifest Himself to us, and that manifestation will be the difference between a nominal Christian life and a life radiant with the light of His face.

Always, everywhere God is present, and always He seeks to discover Himself to each one. He would reveal not only that He is, but what He is as well... Our pursuit of God is successful just because He is forever seeking to manifest Himself to us. The revelation of God to any man is not God coming from a distance once upon a time to pay a brief and momentous visit to the man's soul. Thus to think of it is to misunderstand it all. The approach of God to the soul or of the soul to God is not to be thought of in spatial terms at all. There is no idea of physical distance involved in the concept. It is not a matter of miles but of experience...

So when we sing, “Draw me nearer, nearer,” we are not thinking of the nearness of place, but of the nearness of relationship. It is for increasing degrees of awareness that we pray, for a more perfect consciousness of the divine Presence. We need never shout across the spaces to an absent God. He is nearer than our own soul, closer than our most secret thoughts.

Why do some persons “find” God in a way that others do not? Why does God manifest His presence to some and let multitudes of others struggle along in the half-light of imperfect Christian experience? Of course, the will of God is the same for all. He has no favorites within His household. All He has ever done for any of His children He will do for all of His children. The difference lies not with God but with us.

Pick at random a score of great saints whose lives and testimonies are widely known. Let them be Bible characters or well-known Christians of post-biblical times. You will be struck instantly with the fact that the saints were not alike. Sometimes the unlikenesses were so great as to be positively glaring... differences of race, nationality, education, temperament, habit and personal qualities. Yet they all walked, each in his day, upon a high road of spiritual living far above the common way.

Their differences must have been incidental and in the eyes of God of no significance. In some vital quality they must have been alike. What was it?

I venture to suggest that the one vital quality which they had in common was spiritual receptivity. Something in them was open to heaven, something which urged them Godward. Without attempting anything like a profound analysis, I shall say simply that they had spiritual awareness and that they went on to cultivate it until it became the biggest thing in their lives. They differed from the average person in that when they felt the inward longing they *did something about it*. They acquired the lifelong habit of spiritual response. They were not disobedient to the heavenly vision. As David put it neatly, “When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord will I seek” (Ps. 27:8)...

Let us say it again: The universal Presence is a fact. God is here. And always He is trying to get our attention, to reveal Himself to us, to communicate with us. We have within us the ability to know Him if we will but respond to His overtures. And this we call pursuing God!

The Pursuit of God, by A. W. Tozer. Christian Publications, Inc. Camp Hill, PA. 1982.