

TUTORIAL
9.13

A relationship with Jesus

This tutorial looks at the first question in the area of *Life*: 'Are they experiencing a deepening relationship with Jesus, learning to depend more completely on Him in different areas of their lives, and gradually seeing their values and behavior change as a result?'

Genesis 2:7: Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person.

It was through God breathing into Adam that he actually came alive. Previously he had the actual form of a man, but it wasn't until that process that he came alive. We'll be talking about the life that God intends for us to have in Him. The idea of the Holy Spirit actually comes from this Hebrew idea of breath. And apart from the Holy Spirit giving life and living through us, we're dead just like Adam was.

The Holy Spirit came in and dwelt in the church and gave the church life. Without Him, we're unable to perform the things that God intends. And even a local representation of the church can't do the things that God wants it to do, apart from His breath, apart from His quickening, to use that old term, through His life-giving Spirit.

Last time

We looked at the fifth question from the WILD outline in the area of Identity. It related to people's ability to appropriately represent Christ in their context and community. In this tutorial we will discuss the first question in the WILD outline in the area of Life.

Are they experiencing a deepening relationship with Jesus, learning to depend more completely on Him in different areas of their lives, and gradually seeing their values and behavior change as a result?

Kaikou explains how their lives and activities have changed as they have understood God's grace:

As far as the topic of God's view of us as His much-loved children, we have come to understand God's great love for us and that has really impacted our thinking. Understanding God's love has impacted our lives in very real ways. For example, in the rituals that were done at funerals, and the costumes that were done for firstborn children and initiation rites, and the songs and dances related to death and marriage. We have changed in all of that completely.

But now that our identity is in Christ, we sing about Him and His grace. So whether we are in our homes, or working in our gardens, or just around we are often singing about Him and our salvation.

We asked Bill what they looked for to indicate a deepening relationship with the Lord Jesus:

As we looked at the church we asked ourselves, "Okay, we're going to be doing all this teaching and they're going to have a lot of understanding, but at what point are we going to interact with them on that relationship that they have with the Lord?" And I think there were two things that really stood out to me that gave me encouragement. One was when you just asked them, "What are you reading? What are you studying?" you start hearing stories of, "Man I laid in my bed last night for hours reading and praying." And you start seeing the time that they're spending with the Lord and the interaction and just listening to their conversation, and you realize that they're not taking a test here; they're telling you how they're feeling.

But I think probably the biggest thing that opened my eyes to how they were relating to the Lord was to listen to them pray. One of the things, that of course we got from the Building on Firm Foundations series, was that when we prayed in front of them, we did not have these long eloquent prayers. They were very simple and to the point and yet after a while when you heard them pray, you're thinking, "Where in the world did they get this from?" Because they are very relational, their eyes are open, they're just talking and from their conversation you can tell that they're talking to Somebody, and you can definitely see the growth that they're having with the Lord as they start praying.

So that was one way. We actually documented that in their services, listening to them pray, what they were praying for. Early on it was more physical. As they grew and matured, those prayers suddenly stopped. There's still things in there about their physical lives, but they mainly started focusing on those identity issues, who they were and that they would remember that when they were tempted to sin and especially the hope that they had, one day being able to leave

all this earthly pain and trouble and be with Christ forever. You started seeing that much more in their prayer. So, I think that was one way that we saw that it developed.

Kelley describes how the uncluttered lives and holistic view of the believers is a help to them:

There's no doctor, it's a hike to the nearest house or the nearest aid post and there's not a lot of helps in any area of life. And so when they need something they're so quick to pray. And I remember one time walking down to our elder's house and I had heard that his daughter was sick with malaria. So I said, "Well, have you taken malaria medicine yet?" There's a place where one of the men has been trained to sell it. And he goes, "No, I haven't been down there yet. We haven't even prayed about this yet."

But they're just so quick to call out to Him because there's no one else. And so quick to spend time with Him, because they don't have other things going on. So they're in the garden, and they're talking with the Lord, and they're on the trail. And they're talking to you, and then they're talking to God, and they're praising God. And so, just their lives are not dichotomized like ours, they live so holistically. They believed in the spirit world before. So this is not new to them. So they're actually the experts when it comes to prayer and spirit life. And we're the learners now because we've lived in a materialistic scientific world.

But just to watch them and hear them pray and just the childlikeness of it and then hearing them talk about heaven! I tell people I'm embarrassed and humbled when I sit with the ladies and listen to them talk about heaven because it is so real for them and it is that rest they look forward to because they have no rest. They are still living in the middle of the curse, they are still sweating, they are still feeling the pain, they're still working the ground, and they're still having babies without any anesthetic. And so they are still right there in the middle of it and they long for heaven like I have never longed for it because we have so many comforts.

And so just sitting with them is therapy about where the reality is and where we're going. How they're viewing it is always an encouragement to us to think and pray differently and more personally than we do.

Is their relationship with Jesus producing thankfulness, stability, authenticity, a willingness to serve others, and confidence about eternity?

Greg describes how God's Word has brought about love and acceptance between the believers as they live as a community of faith:

Part of the whole picture as we've watched the church grow is that we've seen the church continue to have a real sense of their identity, where they were at. They are beginning to understand who they were before Christ and now seeing who they are now in Christ, and we are seeing that develop into a life, into a community, and affecting how they function with one another, how they can help each other. We've watched the church grow in an understanding of who God is and how He sees them as people and how then they live out that life amongst themselves as a community and it has been a real pleasure to watch.

The Holy Spirit's impact on many lives has been unique in how He touches people and how He impacts them. They are deepening in their understanding of how God sees them, and how God loves them, what we see through Scripture, how the church should function as a body, how they should bless and encourage one another, how to help each other and how to actually engage with one another.

The church being family has been huge, where they actually see that together they're united, together they're stronger. They care deeply about the needs of each other, that the family is all there.

John remembers how the believers found freedom from old taboos and through music began to celebrate their life with Jesus:

One of the things that happened immediately after we had believers was we said to them, "Your brothers and sisters around the world, they talk to God." So we talked about prayer. And we told them, "and they sing to God, and they worship God and they tell Him how thankful they are for what He's done." And so they said, "Well, can you give us some of these songs so that we can sing them?" And we said to them, "Well look, God's put a new song in your heart. All the things you're feeling about Jesus, all the love you have towards Him, you can express that in a very special way through music."

Now that was another thing that the spirits had denied them. They believed that if they sang, the spirits would be angry. So they had nothing to do with music. And so now, this opened up a new area of music to them. And they would hear us playing songs on tape recorders. And so we said to them, "You start writing songs." Well I tell you what, some of these songs, the first song they ever put together, it went on forever. They tried to put the whole Bible I think in one song, but the theme was "only Jesus could do it". Only he

could do it, no one else could save us, only He. There was this affection for Christ that was so obvious.

John goes on to describe how the believers' prayers were full of thankfulness:

They had no word in their language for "thank you". I'm sure they had ways of expressing it in their culture. And so we had to introduce the Indonesian word into their language. But their prayers were full of thankfulness for what God had done, that these people who they knew were considered by many to be half animal and half human, God loved them so much that He sent His Son to die for them. And that had a profound effect upon them. So we saw their thankfulness, we saw it in relationships; we saw changes in how men acted within the family especially in the responsibility that they began to take to help their wives. There were tangible signs.

I remember, I think the first day when we were moving around to the houses, just asking them about their response to what they'd heard and basically looking for testimony of whether or not they believed. What I heard, from almost all of them was, "Yes, absolutely. Christ is my Savior, He's my substitute. He's paid the price for my sin."

John describes how they saw significant changes in relationships among God's children:

If ever they heard of anyone in need, man, they were there like rockets. They just had that heart to care for people. And they knew that because God cared for them, they would show that same love and concern for others. So we did, we saw people becoming generous and caring for one another, giving to one another.

Before, that was all based on obligation. You could ask for anything from anyone and they had to give it, but then they knew very well that sooner or later, you'd be after something from them. Now there was a desire to just look out for one another because God looked out for us. He was the example of how we were to live, Jesus was the model and so there was a real concern for us praying for one another. We took a little girl out to town who had a gut obstruction and needed an operation. The whole group all got together and just prayed. There was this dependence on God in prayer.

Bill describes how believers learned to truly care for each other:

It wasn't just clans anymore; it was believers starting to work together to do those things. That's one way that we saw them changing. I think another way was just this whole idea of when a problem came up someone was coming to help. One of the beauties of the Christian life really is that the Lord works through our hearts so that we learn to love each other. And so, when people had problems, there were other believers that were coming to them

helping them through situations where before people just watched things happen, especially if they didn't have any clan responsibilities. But believers started actually loving believers and helping each other out that way.

Are they able to identify old habits of dependency that get in the way of completely relying on Christ for their standing in God's eyes and for all their true needs?

Dave describes how the new believers gradually left behind religious and cultural practices that were at odds with truth:

When the people first became believers, some of them were still holding on to some of the older traditional beliefs. There was a tremendous amount of pressure on them to still do some of these incantations, these rituals to make their food grow. Also, especially for the village leaders, the clan elders, there was a tremendous amount of pressure on them to do these cultural celebrations that really were mostly designed to raise their status to prove that they are a powerful, important leader in the village.

Some of them did partly give in to some of these traditions but eventually we saw the believers come together and discuss these things. They said, "This really is not acceptable. These are old practices. It does not lift up the name of the Lord. It lifts up our names and it's turning our eyes away from God." And the people together were able to understand that and come to those conclusions. And it was exciting to see them do that.

We didn't go out and just clobber them over the head for not maybe immediately dropping some of these cultural practices because we wanted it to be something that really came from their heart. We didn't want them to be conforming to our wishes as outsiders. So, we continued teaching them God's truth and it was exciting to see God's truth having effects in their lives, in areas that were very deep seeded culturally for generations among them, and yet they began to gradually let go of those.

Of course they realized more fully what it meant to pray to God and that replaced these incantations. We needed to make sure they clearly understood that prayers are not just the incantations with just a slight twist, just a slight difference. And at first, perhaps some of them might not have fully understood that, but I think most of the believers really do.

Matt gives an illustration of how a relationship with God is helping a believer deal with fear of the spirits:

We've seen, in a number of different ways and a number of different friends' lives, how the Word of God is becoming an authority in their life and changing their whole lives. They are used to being fearful of the spirits, being fearful of the dead spirits or the dead ones or the ghosts. They live in constant fear of those spirits. And we've seen with those that have trust in Christ and have understood who He is, that He's their Creator, and that He is their Savior. And as they grow in that understanding based on the Word of God, their fear dissipates.

One of our friends, a very fearful lady, mother of nine or ten children, lived with fear every night. She would say she would hear the spirits of the graveyard. She lived next to an infant graveyard, and she would hear those spirits every night and hear babies crying and hear all kinds of things that would just capture her in fear. And then she grew in her understanding of who Christ was, and that He's in her life as a believer.

She told my wife that from one day to the next, she no longer heard those babies crying. She no longer lived in fear. And when her husband would leave to work and be gone for days on end, when she was overwhelmed with fear or felt fear coming in, she would just recognize in prayer and just say, "Lord you're here with me. Your Word says You are here with me. You're my Savior, you're my Creator." And all the fear would dissipate in her life and now she lives a bold life. How the Word of God just keeps shaping her is so exciting to watch.

Is the direction of their lives gradually changing, not through their own efforts to try to be "Christian," but as the Spirit teaches and equips them to live out the attitudes of Christ in valid ways?

Phil explains how they taught that God's intention is to live His life out through His children when they depend on Him and not their own efforts:

That's the core element of the questions, "What is it for ministry? What is it for life, what is it for anything?" It's this relationship to the Lord that has this outer flow into so many other different areas, whether I'm communicating about that life or whatever it happens to be. But that is, in my mind, the core essential element. And so as we're communicating with these guys we're saying, "That's what God's looking for." His standard for whether or not you're one of His children is whether you have Him in you.

How you have Him in you is because you accept the sin problem and accept His remedy for it. Then He gives you His Spirit to live inside of you. Now, you are the temple of God, not the temple made

with human hands, but the temple that He made that He wants you to live in. And not just you individually, but you corporately as a whole body. The temple is both individual human beings and the corporate body of Christ. And so He's working inside of you, and He's wanting this thing to flow into every area of your life. And He's wanting this relationship to be the source for everything and for Him to be the power for everything that's happening. So, whatever you're doing, He wants it to be something that's done through His power, through His leading, that He's telling you to do this. You're doing it in dependence on Him and that's the basis for everything that you're doing.

So there's constantly this attempt to confront and undermine the works mentality when somebody says, "I gained relationship by virtue of what I do." And so, we've told lots of stories about it in different analogies where we're trying to explain it to people. We're trying to help them understand. I guess one of the easiest ones probably to grasp it—and we've had this discussion with a lot of individuals around Ramadan that we just started yesterday or the day before—is the story of Cain coming to the Lord.

Cain, he's a gardener and he's taking the best of what he's got. The issue isn't that he's bringing food, it's that he's bringing something that he's done. So it's almost like this basket that he's bringing to the altar. And he's put in there the best that he can drum up. The choicest foods and everything like that, that he's bringing these offering to the Lord. God is like, "No, the principle's wrong. It's not how good this fruit is, it's something that you've created."

So, when we were doing this illustration many times over the teaching, we said that it's like I have this big basket and I put it on this altar and say, "Well Lord, I'm bringing this and I'm bringing this." When we got into speaking about salvation, it was the same thing. We took the same basket, "Well, I prayed five times a day, I got baptized, I fasted." It's like all these things that we've put in this basket are going to save us. As if it's things that we've done and things that are coming out of our own effort to earn something and we're hoping that because of all these things, then we're going to be accepted.

So we're saying to them, the point of all this is that we're coming empty handed. And God wants us to recognize and to accept and to own the emptiness and to say, "If anything is going to be good, if anything's valuable, if I'm going to be saved in any way, it's coming from what You've done, not from what I'm bringing into the equation." So we're trying to constantly have the sense where we're

communicating the complete and total and utter sufficiency for Christ for everything. From salvation to life, to being the Source of everything it is that you do.

This again comes back in Ephesians and in Romans and all these sorts of things where you see Scripture saying, "Okay, in light of all of this, now, therefore..." And then there's some appeal to action. But that appeal to action is always coming after a grounding in a relationship and an understanding of the wholeness and completeness and the sufficiency of this relationship. And it's the outflow of that relationship that now says, "Now, therefore..." And you get into practical matters of, "Don't do this, or this, or the other thing." But it's always that sense of tying it back to who God is first rather than starting from the idea of, "Let's make these following adjustments."

John gives an example of a woman who evaluates her actions according to the Spirit's guidance rather than by cultural norms:

I remember once, we had the field chairman come in, and I was telling him about all these amazing changes that we're seeing in the lives of these people. And we hadn't even got into the New Testament. And we walked down to what we call their teaching house, which was just a big roof but could accommodate about 250 people actually and get them in out of the sun or out of the rain.

As we came off the road or off the track and into the teaching house, there I see this woman bashing the daylights out of this young girl. And I've just been raving on about how wonderful these people are and we're confronted with this sight. Anyway, we come over and we're able to see that thing stopped. There just seemed to be dramas all the time in there, but those things were changing and I thought, "What a shame we saw this after I've told him all that other stuff. It's unfortunate that he's not probably going to get a very good picture of what is actually happening here."

The woman that was beating that young girl, she was the daughter of the patriarch actually for that area. She could be a very mean woman. She'd gone through two or three husbands and I'd heard stories that she'd beaten her husband and all sorts of things. She could be a very mean woman. That afternoon, that woman came up to my house and said to me, "Sita Larry," (that's what they called me which was the way they pronounced "Australia" initially). She says, "Sita Larry, I was right to punish her because she stole from my garden." Basically what I said to her was, "If that's the way you guys

deal with theft and that's your system of social control and you know for sure that she did you wrong, then yes, okay fair enough."

She said, "That's right." She went away. She came back the next day and she said, "Sita Larry, I did do right, did I? I did do right to beat that girl." I said, "That's the way you guys deal with theft, yes. You probably did." Off she went again.

The next morning, that young girl and her husband came to our house and they said, "Do you know what happened? That woman came to me and she apologized. She told me how sorry she was for beating me. And she said she has never apologized, she has never admitted ever doing anything wrong ever in her entire life. And yet she came and she apologized." These were the sorts of things that we were seeing happening. People were changing before our very eyes.

Kaikou says that before they were born again, death was a terrible thing to them, but now when believers pass away it is a totally different thing:

I want to talk about the life of the church. It is like before we heard God's Word we were alive but in a way we were dead. That goes right back to our ancestors and came right through to our generation before we believed. We understand now that we, like all humans, were dead because we were separated from God's life.

And so it dates back to the beginning when people began to live on the earth. They were physically alive but spiritually dead. In the past, when death came into our communities, our mourning was extreme. We didn't understand death at all. And at times like that, we would be terrified because we would think, "When you die, what happens?" Fear really gripped us often when we thought about the issue of death and where we would go when we died.

But once we heard about Christ, and we put our faith in Him, we knew that we were restored to the source of life Himself. And now it brings us incredible joy to know that we are connected directly to Christ as individuals and also as a group. Even at times of sickness now, instead of being terrified we are joyful because we remember our lives are joined to Christ life. If death happens, we cry but we don't mourn like we used to. Now, we know that our bodies go into the earth but our spirits will live on and so we have a sense of joy along with the sorrow.

From the last case study we saw that death is such a terrible thing for those who don't know the Lord. The unsaved are full of hopelessness because they'll never again see the person who died. But when they come to Christ, as Kaikou

described in the last example, the change is vividly apparent because they know Him and now when they face things as terrible as death, it's actually something that can be mixed with joy. They're not going to see that person again on this earth, but they will see them in heaven and they have that hope which makes all the difference.

God wants us to see our new lives in Christ become a reality. The Spirit of Christ in us. Think of that in contrast to the Pharisees. Jesus was speaking about the Pharisees and condemning them because they got it backwards. They actually tried to produce the life from the outside and get their conduct on the facades perfected. But Jesus is saying that even though you might look nice on the outside, like really whitewashed, but on the inside you might actually be full of dead men's bones. This was quite disgusting. Dead men's bones defiled things in the Old Testament. Jesus is wanting the Pharisees to have the life that stems from within and then that in turn changes the outward parts.



DISCUSSION POINTS

A relationship with Jesus

1. As you listen to the church planters in this tutorial, make note of anything they mention that were key indicators of the believers' deepening relationship with the Lord Jesus.
2. Imagine you have had opportunity to share God's Word in a minority group, where music is only used in traditional rituals. The new believers begin to write songs of worship and they ask you if it is OK to accompany these songs using their traditional instruments and music style. How would you respond?