

Plugged In, But Not Flipped On
Message for April 29, 2018
North East United Methodist Church
Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

What an Amazing Week!!!

This past week, I heard God. Each night of the Deeper Life Crusade I heard the same theme, the same Word, emphasized: **Surrender**. I knew God was speaking not simply to the many men and women present, but God was speaking directly to me.

As many of you know, our church has been studying The Holy Spirit by Billy Graham on Tuesday mornings. Graham explains, *“God subsists in three Persons - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - and...these three Persons constitute the one God...The Father came first, then the Son became incarnate, died, and rose again. Now the Spirit does His work in this age of the Spirit.”* Graham continues, *“We have seen that the Holy Spirit is a person, and is God, and is a member of the Trinity. Anyone who fails to recognize this is robbed of his joy and peace...for although the Father is the source of all blessing, and the Son is the channel of all blessing, it is through the Holy Spirit at work in us that all truth becomes living and operative in our lives.”*

Throughout our study, we have explored and questioned how we surrender, moving from our plans to giving the Holy Spirit control of our lives. We have asked, “How do we listen and hear the Spirit?” We have asked, “How often do we squelch the Spirit with busyness?” Graham writes, *“Anything short of a Spirit-filled life is less than God’s plan for each believer.”*

The study and our group discussion has challenged me. How do I surrender more, yield more, trust more, in God’s Holy Spirit, allowing the Holy Spirit to direct my life, my future?

As I look back, I have had marvelous seasons where I was yielded to the Holy Spirit and God was able to do some amazing things in my life and ministry. These were seasons where I was immersed in the Word of God, in Bible study and small groups with other believers, spending time in prayer each day. These were precious seasons in which I was intimate with, as John Hobbs would say, “*my daddy.*”

Through Billy Graham’s book and the Deeper Life Crusade I have realized that, in this moment of my life, I need to trust more fully, surrender more fully, to the Holy Spirit directing my life, leading me in the ways God would want me to go. As Graham and John Hobbs pointed out, “*It is not how much of the Spirit we have, but how much the Spirit has of us.*”

Graham explains, “*All believers are baptized with the Holy Spirit. This does not mean, however, that they are filled or controlled by the Spirit.*” Graham continues, “*To be Spirit-filled is to be controlled or dominated by the Spirit’s presence and power...Instead of doing things only with our own strength or ability, He empowers us. Instead of doing only what we want to do, we now are guided by Him. Unfortunately, millions of God’s people do not enjoy the unlimited spiritual wealth at their disposal because they are not filled with the Holy Spirit.*” Personally, I do not want to be one of the millions not enjoying, not being filled with, the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 8:5, we read how Philip went to the city of Samaria and told the people there about the Messiah...the people believed Philip’s message of Good News concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. As a result, many men and women were baptized.

They accepted Christ...they believed that Jesus was more than a man...that He was the Son of God as talked about in prophecies of old...that Jesus came to die upon a cross, to take their place, to face the punishment for their sins, and to enable them to have a relationship with God. They believed.

But like Max Lucado says in his book, Come Thirsty, they did not have the power.

Lucado writes, *“Saved, but not spiritual. Plugged in, but not flipped on...I used to think there were two kinds of people: the saved and the unsaved. Paul corrects me by describing a third [in his letters]: the saved, but unspiritual. The spiritual person is Spirit dependent, Spirit directed, Spirit dominated. He seeks to ‘walk in the Spirit’ (Galatians 5:16)...Conversely, the unspiritual person act[s] ‘like people of the world’ (I Corinthians 3:3). In language, lifestyle, priorities, and personality, they blend in with nonbelievers. They let God save them, but not change them.”*

Back in Samaria...Philip has preached to the people about Christ and many have believed and been baptized...In Acts 8:14-17, we read, *“When the apostles back in Jerusalem heard that the people of Samaria had accepted God’s message, they sent Peter and John there. As soon as they arrived, they prayed for these new Christians to receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them, for they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John laid their hands upon these believers, and they received the Holy Spirit.”*

Now they were not only saved but changed. Now they were not only believers but they were empowered.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, after His resurrection, He met with the disciples for forty days, teaching and eating with them. He told them that they were to be His witnesses, going into the

world, letting others know about God's love. But before they were to go into the world...before they were to begin their ministry...Jesus told them, in Acts 1:4, *“Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you what he promised. Remember, I have told you about this before, John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”*

Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem...to not go into the world in ministry until after they had waited and received power from on high...the power of the Holy Spirit...until they had received God's energy.

When you and I put our faith in Christ, accept Jesus as our Savior...accept that Jesus was the Son of God and that He died on a cross that our sins might be forgiven and He rose from the dead that we might have life...when we choose to believe in Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to live within us.

Ephesians 1:13-14 – *“In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory.”*

Jesus said, John 14:16-17, *“And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”*

But as Graham explains, *“All believers are baptized with the Holy Spirit. This does not mean, however, that they are filled or controlled by the Spirit.”*

My wife and I are in a time of transition in our lives and with those transitions there are struggles and worries and fears. When I begin to allow fear to take hold of me I grab for control, no longer allowing the Holy Spirit to be in the lead. As my wife and I watch our boys grow up, graduate college and high school, prepare to get married, I cannot help but to worry about the future as I watch our family dynamics changing. As I prepare for Parent Plus Loans that I borrowed to pay for my oldest to go to college coming due, I am frozen with fear wondering how I will ever be able to pay them back. God is calling me to write, to teach, but I cannot see how it will work out, how it will happen, as I find it hard to pause to catch my breath. Over the years Deb and I have been in ministry, we have been hurt and gone through many difficult seasons. I find myself afraid of what the future holds in my ministry, at North East UMC. Will I be able to lead this church into the future? Will I be able to minister to the congregation and encourage them to step up and step out in ministry and mission to the world?

Often these many fears paralyze me and hold me back, keep me up at night. I realize that these fears and worries revolving around family and finances and ministry and the future are a great burden I am carrying. It is a burden I cannot continue to carry; I have not the strength.

This is what God spoke to me time and time again this past week.

It all started with John Hobbs on Sunday night when he spoke about trusting and recognizing, again, that *“It is not how much of the Spirit we have, but how much the Spirit has of us.”* John mentioned that Jesus did not start His public ministry until receiving the Holy Spirit at His baptism. John asked, *“If Jesus needed the Holy Spirit to achieve His ministry, how much more do we need the Holy Spirit? How could we think for a moment that we could get by without the Holy Spirit empowering our lives?”* Have we given the Holy Spirit control? Have we surrendered? Are we

trusting God's Holy Spirit to lead us, use us, work through us, direct us in our decisions?

The theme continued with Hal Chaffee on Monday night as he challenged us to surrender, to trust God with not only our past, but our presents and our futures, that even our greatest afflictions are but "*slight*" compared to the heavenly glory that awaits us.

On Tuesday night, Steve Basht brought this theme home. Using his work with dogs, he spoke about how dogs will try to step into the leader role if they live with humans who don't lead. This is unhealthy because dogs were born to follow and stepping into the leadership role in a family will often result in nervous and fearful behavior, just like when I try to control and lead my own life I find myself nervous, fearful of the future, burdened. Steve spoke about how when a dog's owner takes leadership the dog will relax in a state termed "*calm submission*" knowing that someone has things in order, is watching over them. Are we submitting to the Holy Spirit in our lives? Are we experiencing that "*calm submission*," a relaxed state knowing that our Creator, our Master, is watching over us?

Lastly, Jack Cohen spoke about the Prodigal Son and coming home, stressing that the son who left to a far country was not the only one far away from God. The older brother who stayed home was far away from his father as well. Cohen spoke about how there are people outside the church and in the church that are, for whatever reason, far away from their Heavenly Father and need to return HOME, trusting and surrendering once more their hearts to "*their daddy*."

All week I heard the same theme again and again. SURRENDER. TRUST. YIELD. Every night I prayed, "Lord, I surrender to you. Help me trust in your Holy Spirit. Help me trust you with my

future, my finances, my children, my ministry. Help me give you control. I can carry this burden no longer.”

Paul writes, Romans 15:13, *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”* I want this hope, this trust, in my life and I want for each of you...more importantly, God wants for each of you, His children, to experience this hope, this trust...God wants us to know the Indwelling Holy Spirit pouring out to *“inundate, or baptize our soul and body, and refresh the world around.”*

In their book, The Holy Spirit and You, Dennis & Rita Bennett explain,

“When the Bible speaks of Jesus ‘baptizing’ in the Holy Spirit, we immediately visualize something external, somebody being put into something. However, the word baptize in Greek means to ‘completely suffuse’ – it is used in classical Greek of a sunken, water-logged ship – so it does not really make any difference whether Jesus immerses us in the Holy Spirit in an external sense of the word; whether He inundates us from outside; or whether Jesus causes the Spirit to rise and overflow from where He is living inside us, to suffuse our souls and bodies. Probably both pictures are true – He ‘comes upon us’ both from outside and inside, but it is important to remember that the Holy Spirit is living in you, and that therefore it is from within that He can flood your soul and body. Jesus says: ‘He that believeth on me...out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water [the Holy Spirit]’ (John 7:38), and the Amplified Bible says: ‘Out of his innermost being shall flow...’ When we receive Jesus as Savior, the Holy Spirit comes in, but as we continue to trust and believe Jesus, the Indwelling Spirit can pour out

to inundate, or baptize, our soul and body, and refresh the world around.”

Have you surrendered to God and allowed His Holy Spirit to fill you? Are you praying each day to be refreshed, searching the scriptures for new “*fillings*” of God’s Holy Spirit? Are you continuing to trust and believe Jesus, continuing to go to Him for answers, for guidance, trusting Him with your worries, your situation, your anxiety?

I cannot carry the burdens, the worries, the fears I’ve been carrying any longer...I know there are many people here that feel the same way...you have been carrying things far too long...the fear, the worry, over your situation has weighed you down and stolen your hope...it is time to surrender...it is time to let go...it is time to trust whatever it is that you might be carrying to the One who loves you so...it is time to ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit, to raise up the power that is already inside all who believe...

And tomorrow...and the next day...and the next day...when worry and fear and life begin to weigh you down...when you find yourself trying to steer the ship yourself...it will be time once more to seek a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit and to once more trust, giving God control of your day, your situation...

Let today be the start, the beginning, of a daily practice of allowing God’s Holy Spirit to fill and refresh and empower and lead us...