

Define the Relationship

Spirit Filled

Frankton – 2/8/15

Scripture: John 16.4-11 Jesus to go away so the HS can come; work of the HS

Proposition: Followers rely on the Holy Spirit to help them.

We've been talking the last few weeks about the difference between being a [SLIDE] fan and being a follower. As quickly and simply as I can, here's the difference, and this comes from Kyle Idleman's book, *Not a Fan*. A fan is an enthusiastic admirer, but he's never in the game. On the other hand, a follower makes sacrifices. He gets in the game. We talked about Nicodemus, fan, coming to Jesus at night, so as not to sacrifice his stature as a Pharisee; and Nicodemus, the follower, being one of the two men who buried Jesus. We talked about the immoral woman, the follower, who didn't hesitate to risk coming into a Pharisee's house to show her love for Jesus, while the Pharisee, the fan, didn't show even common hospitality to Jesus. We talked about Jesus telling the crowd that he wants to be their one and only, not their one of many. Last week, we talked about your relationship with Jesus isn't just based on how many of the rules you follow. Relationships are greater than rules. So let's get continue talking about fans and followers of Jesus.

Picture this scene for a minute. You, your spouse and your three children are flying to Disney World for a vacation. You get to the airport, park, take the tram to the terminal, check-in and go through security. Here's where the fun starts. Your gate is at the end of the terminal about a half a mile away. The place is packed and so are you. You are carrying your own carry-on, your spouse's carry-on and each of your three kid's carry-on bags. You come to one of those moving sidewalks – you know where you stand and the sidewalk moves you down the terminal. Your spouse and three kids manage to hop on the sidewalk, but because you are the pack mule, you are too wide to make the transition. There they go, down the terminal watching you. You decide that you'll hoof it to your gate. So you take off and in the beginning you keep up with your family. But the longer you go, the slower you become. Also, you manage to drop one of the bags and it springs open strewing your own underwear all over the terminal floor. You gather all your belongings and lumber on down to your gate to find your family sitting down, but there are no chairs left for you because everyone else at your gate managed to ride the moving sidewalk. You drop all your bags as your kids say, "Look at the big airplanes!" and your spouse says, "It's a beautiful day to fly!" You have sweat running down both sets of cheeks and your frustrated and exhausted already before your vacation even really begins.

I think that when we try to follow Jesus without relying on the Holy Spirit, we feel a little like the airport scenario and we find ourselves frustrated by our failures and exhausted by our efforts. Fans who try to follow Jesus without the power of the Holy Spirit will fail over and over again. We'll keep doing what we don't want to do and we won't do the things we know we should do and really want to do. We promise others, and ourselves, that we will change and that we really mean it this time. But the change rarely lasts more than a few days. We lie awake and night and promise not to lose our temper ever again, or go to that website ever again, or take that drink over again or light up that cigarette ever again or pass on that juicy gossip ever again. But a few days or a week later we're lying in bed making those same promises to ourselves. It just doesn't work. Fans haven't

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discovered what followers know: It doesn't work without the power of the Holy Spirit. [SLIDE] So the question becomes: Are you a self-empowered fan or a Spirit-filled follower?

In Acts 1, Jesus tells his followers that they are to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Then they watch him float out of sight up into the heavens. I'm sure this would have seemed overwhelming to his followers. It's one thing to follow Jesus when he's right here in the flesh. They could talk with him. They could see him calm the storm or provide food for them. But as they watched him disappear into the clouds, they must have wondered how long they could continue to follow him here on earth. They had no idea what to do next. They were uneducated. They had no plan, no special powers, nor any political influence. How can they follow him if he is not there to lead? But Jesus told them that they would receive power then the Holy Spirit came to them. Fans may try to follow Jesus out of their own strength, but followers are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Don't you read the Bible and become envious of the disciples sometimes? What would it have been like to see Jesus calm the storm or feed 5000 people with a couple of fish sandwiches? We're glad for this Holy Spirit whatever it is, but we tend to think of him being on the JV team of the Trinity. But that's not how Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit. In John 16, which I read earlier, we read one of the last conversations Jesus had with his disciples before his crucifixion. He's trying to prepare them for his death, but they are in denial. They can't imagine losing Jesus; it's the worst possible news. But here is what Jesus said to them: [SLIDE] *it's better for you that I leave. If I don't leave, the Friend won't come. But if I go, I'll send him to you.* [7] Did you catch that? Jesus, who is God in the flesh, says it's better for him to leave, because when he goes the Holy Spirit (Friend) will come. It's better.

Let me give one possible explanation. In the Old Testament there are lots of references to God being with humans. The Bible says that God was with Abraham. God was with the Israelites during the Exodus. God was with Elijah. God was with David. There are more, but you get the idea. Funny thing: There are no references like that in the New Testament. Nowhere in the New Testament does it say that God is with someone. But there is a prepositional change from the Old Testament to the New Testament. [SLIDE] In the Old Testament, it says that God is with us, whereas in the New Testament it says God is in us. In this scripture, Jesus says it's better for him to go, because while God being with you is good, God in you is even better. Jesus could be with his followers, but the Holy Spirit would live in His followers.

Let me give two examples. In Acts 4, Peter and John are brought before the ruling Jewish Council. The Council can't figure out why these followers of Jesus are making such a difference. They are preaching to people about Christ and the folks are believing. They have even healed a man who had been crippled from birth. Yet they didn't have theological training or any theological credentials. The Council is scratching their heads trying to figure out how such ordinary men are doing such extra-ordinary things. They question the two men and ask them by what power are they doing these things. It's clear to them that Peter and John aren't acting out of their own power. Luke, who wrote the book of Acts, gives us reader's insight into the answer: [SLIDE] *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them....* [4.8] One more quick example. In Romans 8.11, the apostle Paul writes: [SLIDE] *The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you.* The same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead now lives in his followers.

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When you become a Christian you receive from God the gift of the Holy Spirit. That's his promise to us, to those who put faith in him. So it's not a question of whether or not you have access to the power of the Holy Spirit; the question is, [SLIDE] "Have you accessed the power of the Holy Spirit?" Fans may have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, but they aren't being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit begins with an honest acknowledgement of our own weaknesses. The truth is that most of us go to great lengths to disguise our weaknesses. Can you guess what the most dreaded question of a job interview? You probably figured it out, "What's your three greatest weaknesses?" How do you answer that? I'll tell you what you don't do – you don't tell them your weaknesses, because if you do they won't hire you. You don't say, "I'm never on time. I'm a professional procrastinator. I have trouble getting along with my co-workers. I'm not sure how to turn on a computer and have no idea what an iCloud is." You make something else up, or you tell them something very minor and you hope they aren't seeing through your lies.

Back to the apostle Paul. He spoke about how acknowledging our weaknesses makes room for Christ's power. *I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.* [2 Cor 12.9b] Paul understands that living in the power of the Spirit means shining a light on our weaknesses. That's what fans find difficult to do. Most fans have learned to make sure everyone knows about their strengths, but no one finds out about their weaknesses. Paul reminds the church in Galatia that depending upon themselves is foolish and makes it clear what they need to do. They need to live by the spirit by keeping in step with the Spirit. Picture it this way: someone walking and every step they take they take with the spirit. You can't live by the Spirit if you only acknowledge his presence one day a week when you come to church.

I want to teach you one little way to help you live in the spirit. It's from Bill Bright and it's called [SLIDE] "Spiritual Breathing." The basic idea is that you live with a moment by moment awareness of the Spirit until walking in the spirit becomes as natural as breathing. Here's how it works. The moment you become aware of a sin in your life, you exhale. And while you are exhaling, you consciously repent of your sin. Let's try it. Think of your favorite sin or the last time you sinned. Exhale and repent of that sin. Tell God you're sorry and ask for forgiveness and the strength to keep from doing that sin again. The only way to be filled with the Spirit is to empty yourself of you. That's what the exhaling is symbolic of – emptying yourself of you. Once you are emptied of you, it provides a place for the Holy Spirit to take up residence in you.

So after you have exhaled, you need to inhale. And while you are inhaling, you pray to be filled with the Spirit and you surrender control over to him. As you practice this spiritual breathing it teaches you to keep in step with the Spirit. Followers live in a continual awareness of the Spirit's presence and a constant prayer to be filled with his power. Let's try it a few more times...out...in..out...in.

Fans foolishly think that with enough hard work, they can follow Jesus. The problem is they eventually get burned out from trying to live the Christian life out of their own efforts. Some churches don't help with that. They send the message that "trying harder" is the only way. They slip into the "do-it-yourself" mentality. The emphasis is on themselves and their work and their effort, not on the power and availability of the Holy Spirit. Followers of Jesus understand that it's a journey they were never meant to make alone. Instead they keep in step with the Spirit and he

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gives us the strength and power we need. Tap into that power. Keep in step with the Spirit. Don't go it alone. If you do, you'll lose.