

REFUEL

June 18th, 2017

Who remembers the very first car you owned?
What'd you have? Let's take a poll: *Chevy Impala. Ford Pinto.*
Who had a beater, a tank, a getto-crusier?

My first car was a 1962 Ford stationwagon; 50 bucks.
3 on the tree. About a 100 ft wheelbase. It would regularly hold
13 kids, maximum 21. It was a very rare color you may not have
heard of. It was called Chick Repellent 2 tone brown. We went
bombing around in The Brown Bomb. I spruced it up by spray
painting a big green peace sign on the roof. The thing about that
car was we were always running out of gas. (Knob hill gas story.
84 cents of gas) Always running on empty.
I thought the E on the gas gauge meant "Enough!"

I don't know what you came here looking for today, but you
probably didn't come here to talk about cars. Here's something
else I know you *don't* want... you don't want EMPTINESS.
The good news is God doesn't want you to be empty either. I
don't like living on empty but we seem to run on empty a lot in
our lives. Just like cars we've got to REFUEL all the time.

When I'm spiritually empty I don't act normal, I sputter and stall.
I'm more selfish. I'm irritated easily. I'm more vulnerable to
temptation. I'm cynical. It's harder to make good decisions. And
when I'm empty I feel far away from God.

Here's what I've learned about my own spiritual journey. If I
don't refuel, and if I don't CONNECT with God *a lot*, I go empty
pretty quick. I can't just fill up on Sunday and make it through the
week, do you know why? Because I use up energy and... *I leak!*

And I bet I'm not alone, am I?

A lot of folks give this appearance like they've got it going on!
They're helping people and doing stuff! Jesus junior! But when
you go deep with them you begin to hear comments like:

“I don’t feel connected to God all the time. Sometimes the Bible is confusing. Sometimes I feel like I don’t know how to pray.”

What comes with emptiness is a desire to CONNECT with God. Do you want to hear some really good news? We don’t have to live life on empty. We can be spiritually refueled. We can be FILLED with *“life and power”*. Here’s how I know...

The apostle Paul in Ephesians 3:19 says this: *“May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you’ll never fully understand it. THEN you will be filled with the FULLNESS of LIFE and POWER that comes from God.”*

I love that verse. I can be FILLED with God even though it says I’ll never fully understand it. How can something fill you up that you don’t fully understand?

I don’t fully understand how a TV works, but I can grab the little plastic man-toy, push the buttons and all of a sudden golf appears that fills me up with entertainment.

Here’s the deal. LIFE and POWER don’t come from an infomercial. Or a self-help book. Or support groups. Or other people. Or government programs. Life and power comes from only one source ... God! And here’s the kicker, it’s available to sinful, selfish, stupid, little old *me!*

And... It’s available to you too. But it’s probably not what you think it is because when people describe their spiritual life emptiness, they respond with things they need to DO. Like...

If I get up an hour earlier I could read the Bible and keep a journal and I could pray and meditate. If I did all that stuff, THEN I’d be refueled. That’s actually a recipe for failure. Where does this idea come from that we get refueled by all that we *do?*

NOT from Jesus.

I think it comes from people like me! Sorry! Well intended, good-hearted pastors and teachers and writers.

I was taught that to be refueled you've got to pray. Why? Because Jesus prayed. You've got to read the Bible. Why? Because Jesus did, and he memorized it. So we have to memorize the Bible. He also did miracles. He witnessed to people, He rode a donkey! Where am I going to get a donkey?

Jesus fasted. Not only do I have to pray, and read, and memorize, and fast, I've got to do it in a quiet place. Because one verse out 30,000 in the Bible says Jesus withdrew to a quiet place. Then there's one verse in the gospel of Mark that says he did it in the morning so I've got to do it in the morning.

And he did it on a mountain. The closest mountain is like a thousand miles away. Would a cliff on the north shore work? What time am I going to have to get up to be there in the morning?

Ok, please don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying prayer is bad or you shouldn't read the Bible. Those are foundations to your faith. They are essentials to a spirit filled life. And if you have a daily routine going right now that keeps you refueled, keep going. You're doing great!

But, if that's you, you're in a small minority. The majority of us get hung up on all the stuff we're supposed to DO and then we get frustrated because we can't seem to do it all and then we move into failure mode. Agree?

When Jesus called people to him it was INVITATIONAL. He used words like "*Follow me... Come to me...*" Matthew 11:28-29 Jesus said, "*COME TO ME all you who are weary and carry heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you because I'm humble and gentle and you will find rest for your soul.*"

In John 8:12, Jesus says, “*I am the light of the world and if you FOLLOW ME you won’t be stumbling through the darkness.*”

When you think of your own spiritual life, do you think “*My burden is LIGHT... COME TO ME...*” Or do you think, “*I need to do more*” Do you hear a voice inside saying what you’re doing is not enough. Drop down and give me twenty Bible verses! That’s an invitation to PERFORM. And a performance-based faith puts you on a treadmill where you always feel like a spiritual failure.

If you feel the pressure to perform some type of religious duty whatever that is, it leads to *rituals*.

Rituals lead to *checklists*, things I need to do.

Checklists can lead to *failure*.

Failure leads to *guilt*.

Guilt leads to *withdrawal* away from God.

And withdrawal ultimately leads to EMPTINESS.

Jesus is saying, *Come to me... Be with me... Follow me... My burden is LIGHT...* that’s an invitation to CONNECT. Refueling and fullness happens when we CONNECT with God.

If I’m going out to eat with friends I want a place that’s comfortable and *inviting*. Having a meal and talking and laughing soft chairs, nice ambience. That’s comfortable and inviting.

Performance would be more like a cafeteria. You’ve got long lines and mass consumption and there’s this “move ‘em through” institutionalized ambience. It focuses on speed and quantity.

There might be a lot of feeding options but everything tastes like chicken... except the chicken!

So you’ve got this comfortable, quiet setting over here. Then you’ve got this institutionalized cafeteria line over here. Which one seems more inviting to you? We’re talking about *connecting*. We’re talking about developing and deepening a relationship with Jesus in an *inviting* atmosphere that’s natural to you.

That's not forced, that's not institutionalized, not formalized. It's not about lines and mass consumption. It's about *connecting* with God. Listen to the Matthew 11 passage from the Message Bible, "*watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace... Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.*"

Today I'm going to challenge you to *stop* something and to *start* something. STOP, I'd like to challenge you to stop feeling like a failure. Failure leads to guilt. And guilt leads to withdrawal. And withdrawal leads to disconnect and emptiness. It's the opposite of being refueled. So STOP feeling like a failure.

For all of us, the Bible teaches this: *we're ALL failures!* Are you happy now? We're *all* failures in our attempt to be perfect. That's why we need a savior. Jesus died to pay for our *failures*.

When I put my faith in what Jesus did on the cross, imperfect Scott gets to have a relationship with a *perfect* and *holy* God. I can now be *connected* to him. That's what salvation is. I'm saved from my failures. That's the greatest message in the universe.

Romans 3:22-25, "*We are made right in God's sight when...*" we do a bunch of stuff. NOT! *We're made right in God's sight when we TRUST in Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we ALL can be saved in the same way no matter who we are or what we've done. For ALL have sinned. ALL fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet now God in his gracious kindness declares us not guilty. He has done this through Christ Jesus who has freed us by taking away our sins. We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us.*"

If you've never made that connection before, I want to challenge you to make that *relationship* official. Just put your faith in what Jesus did on the cross to CONNECT with God. Maybe God's been knocking on your heart. He wants you to have that relationship, He wants to FILL you up.

For those of us who already have a relationship with Jesus, it's time to STOP feeling like a spiritual failure. You're not. You've been saved by a God who sacrificed his life for you. That's the best news you'll ever get.

Know that God loves you and wants to CONNECT with you. Hebrews 4:16, "*So let us come BOLDLY to the throne of our gracious God.*" Come boldly. Not just *come*. But come with confidence. The first step to refueling is to STOP feeling like a failure. STOP comparing yourself to others. If you've been saved, God wants to CONNECT with you and develop that relationship with you.

Then START thinking of God as a friend.

Maybe you have to change the way you think about God and start talking to him as a FRIEND who is INVITING us into a relationship. Think about going to a good friend's house. Do you stress out and feel pressure to perform? NO. Not if it's a good friend. You walk in; get something from the refrigerator. You're yourself. You're not trying to perform. You're not trying to please somebody to like you more. If they're a good friend you don't feel pressure to... *do*. You just get to be who you are.

Start thinking of God as a good friend. Granted God is a friend who has the power to part the Red Sea and raise people from the dead. But He also has the desire to have an *intimate* and *personal relationship* with YOU. When Jesus said, "*Come to me, Follow me, Be with me,*" he also said this in John 15:15, "*I no longer call you servants. Now you are my FRIENDS.*"

I see myself as a FRIEND of God. God is my friend. When I croak, when I stop breathing here on good old planet earth I get to go into the presence of God, I'll be in the presence of my good FRIEND. My *savior*. The friend I've had a *relationship* and *connection* with for over 50 years.

I'll be in the presence of my friend who's also the creator of the universe. And when I'm in his presence, I seriously doubt that I'm going to say, "Hey God, let me go through a list of all the things I did for you while I was on earth." No! He's my friend. Our relationship isn't performance based. It's love based.

It's a mind shift... you STOP feeling like a failure and you START thinking about God as your friend. And connecting with him is not about a bunch of things you need to DO. It's not a checklist. It's not jump through hoops. It's not about rituals and rules, it's about what? RELATIONSHIP!

It's not about performance; it's about being in God's PRESENCE. It's not about GUILT. It's about his GRACE.

It's not about a FORMULA, it's about a FRIENDSHIP.

So here's a question: when you think of God, what God do you see? The one who lights up at the sound of your voice? Or do you think about an angry father where you're never good enough and he's ready to smack you in the back of the head?

Your view of God changes everything.

We all need to be talking with people about our spiritual journey. It's helpful in our growth. That's why we all need to be connected to a church body. So as we make this attitude shift... and STOP feeling like a failure and START thinking of God as a friend. We need to LOOK for connection opportunities.

I'm not sending you out with a to do list where you've got to check things off. But I want you to experiment this week.

Deal with stuff that's going on in your life that's keeping you empty. Plug the leaks. Talk about stuff that's going to fill you up. Ask for help from other people.

Just dream with me for a second...what would happen if you lived your life refueled? If you lived your life filled with the power and life that comes from God that's available to you. That guilt and failure are off to the side. What would happen?

You'd be different. There'd be more JOY in your life. More PEACE less worry. Your relationships would be more better. You'd be happier. Your conversation with others would be more meaningful. The Spirit of God would be so alive in your life and impact your decisions and the way you treat people. Emptiness would be a thing of the past.

Filled with the power and life that comes from God...

It's going to change everything.

But remember, refueling is an invitation to be CONNECTED.

To be connected to the one who loves you and wants to fill you.

To be connected to Jesus.

Prayer: