

Part 2
refuel

June 25, 2017

AH-HA

Have you noticed they're turning gas stations into entertainment centers. They've even got TVs on the pumps. They've got coffee shops and bakeries and some even have restaurants. "I'm taking you out to dinner tonight dear, get gussied up we're going to the gas station!" They've changed their name to *convenience* stores. Remember when they were called "filling stations." Or *service* stations. Where a human being would come out and fill'r up, wash the windshield, check the oil and the tires. That was convenience. But no matter how nice they make it, going to a gas station is still a bit of a drag. And it's a really big bummer if you choose the wrong fuel. You ever put gas in a diesel vehicle? It just don't work!

Here's the thing, if you want a vibrant relationship with God, if you want to be connected to Jesus, then we've got to learn to refuel. We need to pull into God's service station and fill'r up! Then we can be FULL of God.

Today I'd like to build on what we talked about last week. And try to move us from a feeling of emptiness and running on empty to a feeling of DESIRE. A desire that leads to a genuine connection with God. And the *fullness* that God promises.

Ephesians 3:19 *"May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will not fully understand it. THEN you'll be filled with the FULLNESS of LIFE and POWER that comes from God."*

The Bible says we can be refueled and filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

Here's the big question. If we want it, and it's available to us, why do so many people feel distant from God and feel empty?

Many of us have spent a lot time trying to figure out how to connect with God and be close to God and have a vibrant relationship with God. We open up all these boxes that just don't seem to work. They feel forced or fake or mechanical.

Here's what I'm talking about, maybe you can relate to some of these attempts to get closer to God.

The *Get-Up-Early-in-the-Morning* box. Because all good Christians, that's what they do. They wake up an hour early because good Christians *rise and shine, give God the glory, glory!* Good Christians wake up Peppy! Good morning God! Are you kidding me... It doesn't always work so good for me. I'm not always peppy in the morning. Sometimes I'm closer to Peppy LaPew! Sometimes I don't even speak English in the morning.

But there's this idea out there that if I wanted to get close to Jesus I've got to get up an hour early. It's like God's waiting to have coffee and donuts with me. If I miss it he's going to be ticked at me all day long. Or I'm going to feel guilty. For some of you this early morning stuff actually works. That's great! Sometimes it works for me and sometimes it don't.

Then there's the *Learn-How-to-Pray* box. Maybe you've heard of the ACTS prayer. That if you want to learn to pray you pray for A – stands for Adoration. Then the C – you Confess your sins. Then the T stands for Thankfulness. Then the S is for Supplication, which is just kind of a fancy word that means *help!* That's the how-to-pray ACTS formula. I heard this back in the '80s, but to be honest, it felt like rules. It became forced and mechanical. It actually kind of became a pain in the *ACTS*. So that box didn't work for me either.

Then I opened another box. This was the *Read-Through-the-Bible-in-a-Year* box. Anyone tried that one? It goes like this. All you have to do is read three chapters a day every single day, and then you can read through the whole Bible in a year.

So January 1 you're cranking! You're doing pretty good. In January you're motivated.

You get through Genesis and maybe Exodus. But by the time you get to Leviticus with the 4th animal sacrifice on the 5th hill with the 8th high priest, you're like... I'll become a vegetarian! That doesn't work for a lot of people. But if it works for you...great!

So I'm opening these boxes with the DESIRE that I wanted to be *closer* to God, but they just weren't natural to me. They left me feeling obligated and maybe not quite good enough.

Here's the deal. If I could show you a box that I think would help you connect better with God, would be interested? Ok, more than one... that's enough to keep going. So let's keep going...

One day I was reading the gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. I was looking at the life of Jesus and I had this sort of AH-HA moment. What struck me was the *shortness* in time with which Jesus *connected* with others and it resulted in *life change*.

Jesus had these brief connections with people and they walked away *refueled*. They walked away *filled up*. They walked away *changed*. Jesus either touched them, or blessed them, or healed them. There's dozens of examples. Here's just a few.

Matthew 8, Jesus says to this guy “*Do you want to be healed?*” He says yes. Jesus says, “Be healed.” And he is!

Later in Matthew 8 Jesus simply touches the hand of Peter's mother-in-law and she's healed.

Matthew 9. Jesus says, “*Take heart son, your sins are forgiven.*” And BAM a paralyzed man walks away.

Matthew 9. A woman touches him. Jesus stops and says, “Who touched me?” The woman identifies herself and Jesus uses one sentence. “*Your faith has made you well.*” BOOM! Changed life.

Mark 6 the disciples were refueled just by the presence of Jesus. Brief encounters and changed lives. People totally refueled.

We don't have a blow by blow of everything that Jesus ever did or said. But why did God choose to give us these God-in-the-flesh encounters that were very short and yet refueling.

That was the ah-ha for me. I thought to myself, what if I could be refueled and it isn't limited to that early morning quiet time that I fail often at? That Jesus is right here, God's Spirit is with me. God is not a distant God that we have to make an appointment with. What if instead of scheduling time for him we just become AWARE of him. AH-HA!

A Jesus follower named Brother Lawrence in the 1600s said, "Practice the presence of God." You want to be refueled? You want to be full of Him? There it is! Practice the presence of God.

That's what I want to challenge you to think about today. As I did last week I'm going to ask you to *stop* something and then to *start* something to learn how to be refueled.

First, I want to challenge you to STOP thinking so... BIG.

What I'm trying to do here is free us up from unrealistic expectations that you might have of yourself or have been placed on you by others. Big thinking, doing big things like the only way you can be refueled is to read the Bible cover to cover or to pray for an hour every day at 5 am. And again, like I mentioned last week, if that works for you and it's not done out of obligation, keep going! That's awesome. But you're in a very small minority.

I've discovered that spiritual refueling doesn't have to be one huge spiritual feeding before you walk out of the house in the morning. Instead, I'd encourage you to practice the *presence of God* and *nibble* your spiritual nourishment all throughout your day.

This Stop thinking so *big*, this being a "friend of God" starts with faithful obedience in *small* ways.

Small obedience is a biblical principle. Jesus said in Luke 16:10
“Unless you are faithful in small matters you won’t be faithful in large ones.”

The go big or go home thing doesn’t apply to your faith. It’s not biblical. God loves and blesses the small. Small is beautiful.

In Matthew 17:20 Jesus said, *“I assure you, even if you have faith as small as a mustard seed... nothing would be impossible.”*

And not just faith. It’s *acts* of faith. In terms of serving and giving. Matthew 10:42 Jesus says: *“If you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded.”*

Here’s the thing. You can have life change. You can have a refueling of your spiritual life with sincere *small* connections with God. Fill’r up God! That’s where you start. You to start by STOP thinking so big.

And then I’d challenge you to:

START enjoying the SMALL connections with God.

If you’re spiritually empty, your tank is dry, start enjoying the small connections. A car engine runs just as well for one mile on 84 cents of gas as it does on a full tank. Right?

You can have a connection with God in little ways throughout the day that’ll bring a closeness and life change and you can be refueled. That’s what I’m saying.

Now here’s NOT what I’m saying. I’m NOT suggesting that ALL of your connections with God should be small. As a matter of fact I think everybody needs to learn doctrine and study our statement of faith, and study God’s word. The depth and maturity of your faith will be directly proportionate to how well you know and obey God’s word.

But, I also believe that a spiritual diet can be full with nourishment from nibbling throughout the day.

Being refueled is not about big amounts of time. Being refueled is about DESIRE. Sometimes I desire quick connections with God throughout the day. Sometimes I desire longer refreshment from him. Both are satisfying and both provide nourishment.

Start enjoying the small connections. Those small connections will bring you into the presence of God.

STOP thinking so big, START enjoying the small connections.

Now let's get really practical.

We need to look for *triggers* that'll move us into the presence of God and provide us opportunities for small connections.

Here's what I mean. We already have hundreds of triggers in our lives. When you hear, or see, or smell something it triggers you to a thought or a vision. When I say, "It's the real thing" You're triggered to a Coke. If I say "March madness" you think basketball. We already have these triggers. When I say "RAP music" you get sick to your stomach. That's another trigger.

This idea of memory triggers is throughout the Bible.

Jesus would take an earthly reality and make a connection to the kingdom of God. 1 Corinthians 11, "...*the Lord Jesus took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'*"

The bread is the trigger.

It's to take our mind and heart to the *presence* of God, and what Jesus did on the cross. When his body was broken, when his blood was shed – we're to remember that.

In the Old Testament God instituted the feast of Passover so that the Israelites wouldn't forget their deliverance from Egypt.

In Exodus 12:14 it says this *“You must remember this day forever. Each year you will celebrate it as a special festival to the Lord.”*

In the Old Testament there are several festivals and memorials and offerings that trigger your mind to the power and the *presence* of God. You might know some of them.

A rainbow. A rainbow is a trigger to remember that God won't flood and destroy the earth again. That was a covenant between him and Noah. So every time you see the rainbow, it triggers you to the power and the presence of God.

Not all of them were as pretty as the rainbow. Abraham got circumcision. Imagine that conversation with God! “Seriously? God, are you kidding me? Noah gets the rainbow?”

Triggers help us remember about the power and *presence* of God. I'd challenge you to come up with your own triggers. Here's a couple of examples:

When you take a shower, once a week, think about how God showers you with his blessings and thank Him for scrubbing away your sins.

The beauty in nature can trigger the power of God. Sunsets or rises.

In my office I have little do-dads and cards and photos all over the walls, so as I look around, I remember who gave me a card, or I see a face and I stop and I pray for them. God's presence. That works for me. (Picture of office door)

Some of us get way too busy. We've got to learn how to stop and be quiet. What I'm talking about is make a connection. I don't care how you do it, but just do it, enter into the *presence* of God. Enter into it for refueling. That's the message.

The reality is that God made you to love you. And for us to love and know him. Sometimes we make it way too complicated and it results in dead ends and emptiness.

Deuteronomy 30:11-14 *“This command that I’m giving to you today is not too difficult for you to understand or perform. It’s not up in heaven, so distant that you must ask, ‘Who will go to heaven and bring it down so we can hear it and obey it?’ It is not beyond the sea, so far away that you must ask, ‘Who will cross the sea and bring it to us so we can hear it and obey it?’ The message is very close at hand; it’s on your lips and in your heart so you can obey it.*

You don’t have to go to Israel or the Jordan River to meet Jesus.

You don’t have to go to church to connect with God.

You don’t have to get in a space shuttle to be closer to him.

God’s presence is right here. If you’re a follower of Jesus and you’ve made him Savior of your life, His Spirit has invaded you. He’s right here. He’s not a distant God.

The Bible says in Romans 8:11, *“The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, LIVES IN YOU. And just as he raised Christ from the dead, he will give life to your mortal body by this same Spirit living within you.”*

Do you know that you are in the *presence* of God right now?

And when you leave you’re going to be in the presence of God.

When you go to a restaurant you’re going to be in the presence of God. When you go to work, the presence of God is there. When you’re at school, the presence of God. When you’re playing golf, fishing or whatever... the presence of God is right there. (wagon story?)

God wants you to know him. He doesn’t want us to run on empty. He wants us to be refueled and he made that possible by living in us. Give it a go this week and enter into the presence of God. Start with those small connection nibbles. I know you can. Prayer...