

The new series we're starting today will focus on the Christian life and the Christian lifestyle. Now, what does growth look like? How do you actually pursue it?

Let's start with the two most foundational spiritual truths that I know. Here they are:

Number one, there is a God.

Number two, it is not you.

This means that your life is not your project. What do you think it is? It's God's project. It was His idea. In Ephesians 2:10 Paul says, "For we are God's handiwork. We are created in Christ Jesus to do good works for which God prepared us in advance to do." You are not your own handiwork.

Today, we're going to begin with the Spirit and end with the Spirit and his activity in us. But first we need to see this. This comes from Galatians 3:2. It's very important. Paul writes, "Having begun with the Spirit." What he means is unless you have the Spirit, you haven't even begun the Christian life. Your Christian life hasn't begun unless you've received the Spirit. If you haven't received the Spirit, you haven't even begun the Christian life. It's *very* important. Now, only God knows what you were fully intended to look like. What God intends is for you, in Christ, to become the best version of you—a New You. Quoting Paul again, from 2 Cor. 5:17, he says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

Now, Jesus made quite staggering promises about His ability to transform human lives into this new kind of life. In John 7, there is a feast going on in Jerusalem. There are three big feasts in Israel every year. One of them was called the Feast of the Tabernacles. It was very much like our Thanksgiving. It was a time everyone looked forward to the day that God would send them a Messiah. Now, it was on that day, most likely at that moment Jesus spoke the words of our text. Jesus is saying, "Now you come to Me. Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink."

Now, we start to see the supernatural nature of what He is promising. "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me...and out of your belly will flow rivers of living water." You see, not only will you be satisfied, you will become a source of life to other people. The belly is that place way deep down inside you. Jesus is talking about your core. He's saying, out of your belly will flow hope and joy and strength without you having to manufacture it or fake it or hype it. Why? Because it comes from the Spirit!

When you go through the New Testament, you see these promises of life, of transformation, of rivers of living water that are really kind of staggering. God's plan for you is that you become the best version of you... A New You. Now right now, there are kind of two versions of you.

There is the you God made you to be. And there is the you that currently exists.

Do you think there is a gap between the you God made you to be and the you that currently exists? Most people do. The problem is we think we have to close the gap. So many people think that they can close the gap if they just try harder. And what happens is you get tired; *tired in your soul*.

So here is the question for this series: What if Jesus was right? What if he really meant what he said about there being rivers of living water available, and that they could flow out of your belly? What if such a life as possible for you? Can I bridge this gap by human effort? No. Only God can bridge this gap, and what does God give to bridge this gap? He gives grace. OK. He did that through Jesus. *Just as you get saved by grace, so we are invited to live by grace, and transformation—becoming a new person, happens only through this, because what God does, He always does by grace. God's plan is for you to live every day by grace, to learn to run on grace, to wake up in grace, to receive life and purpose as a gift from Him.*

The picture Jesus uses for this life in the Spirit is the picture of a river, rivers of living water. By this, He means the Spirit. Here is God. Here is grace. Every breath you take, every thought you think, every nerve impulse that causes your body to move the way that you intended...it is all grace. Here is the river, all the time. This is your life and a river runs through it. God longs for it to flourish more than you. God wants you to be the person He made you to be, *more than you do*. It starts by getting real clear about what does my life look like when I'm actually living in the flow of the Spirit. Because then, as we get clearer on that, then we can start to ask, then what are those activities that have open me up to the Spirit, and what are those things that I do that shut me off from the Spirit so that the Spirit can keep running through me all the time.

If there was one verse for us all through this series to just live in that would kind of get us in the Jesus life, it is 1 Thessalonians 5:19, "Don't quench the Spirit." The Spirit is already at work...bigger, stronger, more patient than you and I are, so Paul says just don't quench the Spirit, don't grieve Him, and positively, keep in step with the Spirit. Sow to the Spirit. Walk with the Spirit. You don't have to get it perfect. You don't have to remember every second. All you have to do is get a step closer because the Spirit is real, and He is at work, and it is His job. My job is just to get back in the flow, and that is what we are going to learn together.