

Hey everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek. I am so glad you are here with us today. And we are in a series called Holy Spirit: We Invite You In. And this has been a really big series for our church. You see, I told you when we started this that this was going to be a series full of fear and trembling, a little bit of awe and wonder, a sense of hunger and humility because how do you accurately put the Holy Spirit into words?

And what we've been doing is inviting the Holy Spirit into our lives every single day because we don't want the Holy Spirit to just be the most important person in the room, we want Him to be the most honored person in the room. And last week we talked about how the Holy Spirit gives us the character of Jesus. And I don't know if it was because it was Mother's Day, I don't know if it's May madness and all the activities in our lives. I don't know if it's all the things that we've got going on, but I don't think we really grabbed a hold of what God wanted to say to us last week. After talking with our campus pastors and praying, we had the sense that across all campuses we just didn't really grab a hold of the character of Jesus through the Holy Spirit and so I don't want us to rush on, I want us to do it again.

You see, what I love about our church is we have no interest in religious information. We don't want just new content to fill our heads, we actually want to be shaped and molded into the image and likeness of Jesus. We're a people who really want to honor the Holy Spirit, invite Him into our lives and see the character of Jesus emerge. And we've said now for a couple years that we're not just a harbor of hope, we're a training center for life, which means this is a place where we practice the things of God. We don't just rush on to new things, we practice until we understand and can apply them to our lives because we don't want to just be hearers of the word, we want to be doers of the word. And this is a series about being cut to the heart.

You see, I don't want us to just rush on and move forward because what I wanted to talk about today was the power of the spirit, but if you have power without character you become dangerous because you'll use that power for your good and your glory instead of for the good of others and the glory of God. So I just want us to slow down because we're in no rush to get anywhere and I want us to go through the character of Jesus again and I'm going to jump in and out of it with you with some commentary to bring your attention to some new things. So can I just invite you to open up your mind, open up your heart, catch the gravity of why this matters. And so right now Holy Spirit, we invite you in.

You see, we have always wanted to be a spirit-filled church. Right from the beginning that's always been our heart.

That's why we say we're a Jesus-focused, spirit-filled, life-giving church. Jesus-focused, we're more focused on what Jesus has done for us than what we have to do for him. Spirit-filled, we want to walk in the character and the power of Jesus. And life-giving, we're on a mission to receive and release the life of Jesus wherever we go. That's who we are as a church. And that middle one, spirit-filled, we want to walk in the character and the power of Jesus. You see, I

don't know about you but when I grew up I didn't hear anything about the Holy Spirit. I didn't know who He was, I didn't know what He did, I didn't know what He was like. I had no context for Him. And so in my twenties when I got saved and really started seeking the Lord, I was around a group of people that lived a spirit-filled life and they loved the Holy Spirit. And everything they shared with me and everything they talked about was all about the power of the spirit, signs and wonders, miracles, healing, gifts, abilities, prophecy, tongues, the supernatural things of God

And while those things are so important and they're things we're supposed to seek through the Holy Spirit, they were missing the character part. And what I've learned over the years is that the gifts of the spirit function best within the fruit of the spirit. And that's why He's called the Holy Spirit. Holy, character; spirit, power. So if we're going to be spirit-filled, we want to walk in the character and the power of Jesus. In fact, I love what Jesus says when he says, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I've been doing." When we read this verse, we almost always gravitate to the power side, that we're going to do the things that Jesus was doing like heal the sick and raise the dead and cast out demons and preach the kingdom.

Like we get to do those things and while that is absolutely true this is also referring to the character of Jesus, that we will be able to love our enemy and turn the other cheek, and go the extra mile, and have humility, and have integrity, and serve and do the right thing. And so if we're going to be people that invite the Holy Spirit in and walk in the Holy Spirit, it's both the character and the power. And when we look around, we might say, yeah, the church is missing the power of God. Where's the signs? Where's the wonders? Where's the healing, all that? And that's true, I would disagree with you there. But you know what really is missing is the character. The character of Jesus to go the extra mile, and love your neighbor, and have some humility and do the right thing regardless of what it costs you. If we look at this generation, what the generation needs is the character of Jesus and that's what the Holy Spirit gives us

In fact, I love what Paul says to the Galatians. He says, "Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" I love this. He says, hey, did you get saved by faith or by works? Did you get saved because you believed or because you behaved? You got saved because you believe that Jesus is who he says he is and did what he said he did, and so the Spirit of God moved into your life and raised you from the dead, and made you a new creation. But are you now so foolish after beginning with the Spirit for salvation, are you trying to do the rest of your life through your own efforts? This doesn't work out, and this doesn't make any sense. And yet if we're honest, this is a whole lot of us live our lives.

We trust the Spirit for salvation, but then we do our life in our own strength, our own effort through our own performance. And this is why so many of us never actually change. In fact, can I ask you really honest question? Are you more mature today than you were a year ago? Are you freer today than you were a year ago? Are you more like Jesus today than you were a

year ago? And if the answer is no, then you're doing life in your own strength under your own power because if we're walking in the Spirit, He is transforming us from the inside out and releasing the character of Jesus in our lives.

You see, this is why I think so many of us are exhausted because we're doing life in our own strength. This is why there is so much burnout and chronic fatigue and exhaustion and apathy and tiredness in our lives because instead of walking in the power of the Spirit, we're walking by our own strength, our own effort, our own striving and performance.

What you have to remember is that the Holy Spirit is the fire of God and He never burns out, but the flesh always does. And so if you feel burned out, weary, wore down, it's probably because you're walking in your own strength, in the flesh. You see, you have to remember you can walk according to the Spirit or you can walk according to the flesh but you can't do both. And if I'm walking according to the Spirit, I will not sin and if I'm sinning, it's because I'm not walking in the Spirit. And so the Spirit invites us to let go of the flesh that we may walk in His power and see His character in our lives.

"The works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy, drunkenness, orgies and the like." That's a verse right there, okay? Here's what I want you to see. Works of the flesh. In other words, this is the best of what you can do on your own. In your own strength, in your own effort through your own performance and striving, this is the extent of what you can produce. And I've never seen anybody that looks at this list and say, yeah, you know what, I'd like a little bit of debauchery, I'll take a little bit of witchcraft, and you know what, yeah, put some fits of rage in there for me as well, like that sounds great.

Come on, there ain't nothing on this list that you want in your life, is there? And yet this is the best of what we can do on our own. And if this is the best of what we can do on our own, then we shouldn't be surprised that this is how the world lives. This is the best of what the world can do on their own. So when you get angry at the world for how they're living and what they're doing and how they're thinking, maybe this verse will give you some compassion because this is the extent of what they can produce on their own. This is the works of the flesh. And I know some of you, you're looking at this list, you're like, I don't do any of that stuff. I don't walk in the Spirit but I'm a good person. I'm a good person, man. I love my family, I go to work or school, come on I'm in church right now. I'm a good person. Well, let's let the Bible define good for us. "He was a good man full of the Holy Spirit and faith." Sometimes you just let the Bible define the Bible.

You want to know what the Bible says a good man or woman is? It's someone who is full of the Holy Spirit and faith. Full of faith that Jesus is who he says he is and did what he said he did, and then submitted and surrendered to the Spirit of the Living God. It's God's goodness that

makes us good. Not your effort, not your strength, not your performance. You can't be good without the Holy Spirit and Jesus.

You see, I think a lot of us struggle with this. We define ourselves good compared to how other people live their lives. But how other people live is really an irrelevant standard. You see, the law is the standard. That's why Jesus tells us that there is no one who is good. That's why he had to become sin on the cross so we could become the righteousness of God. He took our bad and gave us his good. It doesn't really matter how other people are living.

It's the wrong standard because you're not trying to live better than other people, you're trying to walk in the freedom of the Holy Spirit with the character of Jesus. And if you walk around thinking that you're good because you're better than other people, it's really pride. It's arrogance. It's independence in your own life that will quench the Spirit from flowing through you. This is what humility looks like, that I need to be full of the Holy Spirit and faith because on my own the best I can do is the works of the flesh.

This is why it goes on to say, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Now, that's a verse. There ain't nothing on that list that you don't want in your life.

And I love that it says, the fruit of the Spirit. This is what the Spirit can produce in our life when we walk with Him. And look, it says fruit singular, not fruits plural. So these aren't, oh, you get a little bit of love and maybe some kindness, and if you get it just right maybe some faithfulness. No, no, no, if you walk in the Spirit, the fruit -- this is like a cluster, they all begin to show and manifest in your life. Why? Because this is the character of Jesus. The fruit of the Spirit is the character of Jesus. And if I walk in the Spirit, all of these start to show up in my life. And I love that it's called the fruit of the Spirit, which means you can't produce it. Just like you cannot create an apple in your hand no matter how hard you try. You can think, you can meditate, you can will yourself but there ain't never going to be an apple that just goes poof in your hands. You can no more create an apple than you can create love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness in your own life.

You see, the fruit of the spirit is one of the most relevant things in your life. It's in the midst of all the difficulties and challenges where his fruit begins to emerge. Come on, when you're angry with other people, it's the Holy Spirit who gives you love for them. When you're depressed and sad and broke down in life, it's the Holy Spirit who gives you joy. And when it feels like the world is flying apart and your situation and circumstances is broken, it's the Holy Spirit who gives you peace. When you have had enough of everyone and everything, it's the Holy Spirit who gives you patience. When you want to quit and give up, He is the one who gives you faithfulness. And when you have just had enough with it all and you're ready to explode, it's the Holy Spirit who gives you self-control. It's the Holy Spirit who produces fruits, the character of Jesus in our lives.

And here's the fascinating thing about it, you can't fake it. You can fake a lot of things in your life. You can fake how you're doing, you can fake how life is going, you can fake behaviors, you can even fake your relationship with God, but you can't fake countenance. You can't fake how your face looks because the fruit of the Spirit manifests or emerges through our own countenance. So can I ask you a really honest question? When the people in your life are around you, do they see the fruit of the Spirit in your countenance? Do they see love, and joy, and kindness and peace on your face? Because that's when you know the fruit of the Spirit is growing in your life.

You see, what I love about the Spirit is no matter what we've got going in our life, no matter the sin, the temptation, the brokenness, the addiction, the pain, the darkness, the bondage, He can set us free. When we submit, and surrender, and receive from, and rest on the Spirit of the Living God, this is what He starts producing in our life. And if you will submit to the Spirit in one area of your life, He brings freedom to every area of your life. See, we need to learn to just trust the Spirit in the here and now. When He says, don't watch that, and He says, ah, let's not talk like that. And when He says, let's not stay here, let's go somewhere else. You know what, let's apologize for what we just said. Let's go pick that thing up.

In those moments, if we would just learn to submit and surrender to His little prompts, His little leadings in those areas, He will bring freedom in every area of our life. This is what we struggle with. It's simple obedience that bring significant breakthrough. And I know some of you, you might be sitting here, you might have a big struggle in your life and you might be like, I've got so much anxiety in my life and you're telling me that if the Holy Spirit is telling me to forgive that person, it's going to free me from my anxiety? Yes. Why? Because if you will submit to the Spirit in one area of your life, He'll bring freedom in every area of your life. And you might be sitting here and saying, I got so much lust in my life, I can't break free, I can't get out of it, and you're telling me if the Holy Spirit is telling me to start serving people, that's going to free me from that? Yes. Why? Because submitting to the Spirit in one area of your life will bring freedom in every area of your life.

Come on, dude, I got so much anger in my life and God's telling me to give. What in the world does anger and giving had to do with each other? Nothing and everything. Because submitting to the Spirit in one area of your life will bring freedom in every area of your life. And the reason we never experience freedom in the every area of our life is because we're not willing to submit to the Spirit in the here and the now in the very little, don't watch this, let's say that, let's go here, let's leave here. We say those are unrelated, but they couldn't be any more related because it is about lordship and trust and submitting our lives to the Spirit's leading. Because in that moment when He tells you to do that little thing and you say no, what are you doing? You're walking in the flesh. So the works of the flesh add to this flesh struggle over here.

But when I submit to this little thing He's asked me to do, I've just submitted and surrendered and the fruit of the Spirit start showing up in any and every area of my life. Are you with me on this? If you want to experience freedom in the every area of your life, submit to him in the little areas of your life. This is why Jesus himself says, "I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him he will bear much fruit because apart from me you can do nothing." If we submit, surrender, walk and receive from the Spirit of the Living God, he will bear the fruits of the Spirit, the character of Jesus will naturally and effortlessly begin to show up in our lives and set us free from the things that are holding us down. In fact, this is what it says, "Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is –

Freedom.

So if I submit to the Spirit in one area of my life, He brings freedom in every area of my life because wherever He is that's where freedom is. So when you don't listen to Him in the little, you've just chosen bondage. If where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom and He asks you to do a little thing and you decide not to do it, you've just chosen bondage when He offers you freedom.

See, there's this fascinating story of a guy named Naaman in in the Bible. He had leprosy and he goes to Elijah the man of God, to be cured. And Elijah tells him, go wash yourself in the river. And Naaman is so angry because it seems like a ridiculous request that he leaves in his pride and his arrogance and he refuses to do it. And it literally says that he thought that the man of God would do something like wave his hand over the spots of leprosy and they would be cured and be gone. And as he leaves in his anger, one of his servants comes to him and says, sir, if the man of God asked you to do something great so you can be healed you would have done it. Why not now do this little thing that you might be healed?

And so he goes and he washes in the river and as he washes in the river he is cured of his leprosy. Come on, since when does water cure leprosy? What does washing in the river had to do with leprosy? Nothing and everything. Because it is about the submission and surrender. It is about obedience and lordship. And I think there are so many of us that we would do a big thing if God asked us to do it to find freedom in our lives. But maybe today, a servant of God is coming to you and even in reengaging this content, it's a God inviting you to do that little thing that you might find the freedom that the Holy Spirit can bring.

And we've been using this verse in the series, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you have received from God? You are not your own." The Holy Spirit doesn't come to visit you, He comes to move in for good. And because He comes to move in for good, He is no longer a guest, He's actually the owner of the house. Now, I want you to think about this silly illustration with me for a second. I'm telling you it's silly up front but just go with me on it. Let's say that your Aunt Ida was sick and because you love her you decided you were going to go move in with her to help her. So you pack up all your stuff,

you go to Aunt Ida's house, you knock on the door and when she opens the door a smell that is so pungent comes from out of that house that it almost knocks you down.

And you look at Aunt Ida and you say, Aunt Ida, what's going in here? And she says, I don't know what you're talking about, but I'm so glad you're here. Come on in. And you walk in and it smells so bad you can barely breathe. You walk into the kitchen, there's garbage everywhere. There are 47 cats who have peed on everything. There is junk piled from the floor to the ceiling and like every room, there's toxic mold growing in the bathrooms and you're like, Aunt Ida, what has been going on here? She says, I don't even know what you're talking about. You're like, you don't know -- you can't smell that? You don't see this? And she doesn't. Because she's so used to live in it that it's become normal. Now, if you are just visiting, you would be okay, you'd have your little cup of tea and leave and walk out the house and be like, whoo, okay, let's get on with life here. But you're moving in and you're like, Aunt Ida, now that I'm living here we're going to have to do some things differently.

Like we're going to have to get rid of all of this garbage. And the cats, I know you love them, but they got to go, all of them, not like 46 of them, all 47 of them got to go, okay? And we're going to clean the carpets and we're going to get rid of that toxic mold. And we're going to put some locks on the doors so that people can't just come in here whenever they want. Okay. That's what happens when the Holy Spirit moves into our life. He doesn't come to visit, He comes to stay. And because He comes to move in, there are all kinds of smells and things and brokenness in your life that you're completely unaware of. You're completely oblivious to it, it's like so normal to you until the Holy Spirit moves in and says, hey, we've got to deal with this garbage and we got to get rid of the cats and we got to get rid of the mold because it's going to hurt you. The Holy Spirit moves in and says, there are some attitudes and some behaviors and some thoughts and some actions and some things you do and some places you go that are not good for you, so I have come to set you free.

This is now my home and I'm going to make it holy with you.

Okay, I know I was hard on the cats. And if you're a cat person, I'm sorry. Sometimes when I feel like people aren't engaging or have lost their attention, I can get a little extreme in my preaching to bring their attention back and I want you to know that God loves cats and He made cats. The whole point of that illustration is this. Is that sometimes there are just places in our lives that we are so unaware of but they are hurting us. And so can I just ask you the honest question of like where is there sin in your life that you are unaware of but that has become normative in your life?

Where has sin, gossip and ungodly belief and offenses and apathy and things and the standards of this world, where have they just become so normal to you that you're not even aware that they're there? This is when we need the Holy Spirit to come and show us the things we're not even aware of because they're hurting us. And He wants to free us and remove

them from our life. And the reason we struggle with this is because this is what it looks like to die to self, to crucify the flesh with its passions and its desires and we don't like to do that. But the Holy Spirit wants to free us. And when He moves in, the things that grieve Him should start to grieve us. And what bothers Him should bother us. And what smells bad to Him should smell bad to us. We want to honor Him because now He dwells within us.

You see, we said last week that the Holy Spirit is just like Jesus. So if we want to know Jesus is like, just look at the Holy Spirit. And when we think about Jesus, we think about his gentleness and his kindness and his compassion. And that's why we often picture the Holy Spirit as a dove. But again, it doesn't say He's a dove, it says He is like a dove. And yes, Jesus was incredibly gentle, but Jesus was also a fierce warrior. Here's a passage that many of us forget, "Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who are buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. It is written he said to them, 'My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers.'" We don't ever think about Jesus in this context. Another one of the gospels tells us he made a cord of whip. He's flipping over tables and he is snapping a whip to get the den of robbers out of his house.

What is the temple? What is his house? You. And if the Holy Spirit is just like Jesus, that when the Holy Spirit comes in and He finds a den of robbers trying to steal, kill and destroy you, He is not gentle, He is a fierce warrior and He will flip over the tables in your own soul to drive out the darkness that wants to steal, kill and destroy. Come on, the anger of God is directed at anything that interferes with His love for you. He is aggressive and anything that keeps you in bondage, and if you invite Him in, He's going to flip over some tables because He wants to drive the robber out of your house that you might be free. Yes, He is gentle as a dove, but it was also the Spirit who empowered Moses to defeat Egypt, Gideon to defeat the Midianites and David to defeat Goliath.

He is a fierce warrior on your behalf and you want Him to be. He is the ultimate security system if you will to keep the robbers out because His house is a house of prayer, of intimacy, relationship and communion. Come on. Holy Spirit, turn some tables over in our lives.

You see, praying, Holy Spirit, I invite you in is a dangerous prayer because what you're really saying is, Holy Spirit, come in and turn over the tables in my life. Come and drive out the things that are stealing, killing and destroying. Come and remove the things that are becoming a barrier between me and you. And so do you have the courage to literally say, Holy Spirit, come and make this a house of prayer, make this a temple of holiness, make this a place of communion and intimacy where I do well and walk and abide with you.

You see, one of the most famous passages that Jesus gives us when he talks about the Holy Spirit is in John 16 when he says, "When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment. In regard to sin because men do not believe in me, in



regard to righteousness because I'm going to the Father where you can see me no longer and in regard to judgment because the prince of this world now stands condemned." See if you can catch this because this is really important. The Holy Spirit comes to convict us. The word convicts means to convince. He comes to show you, to convict you, to convince you of something that is true.

And so just break it down with me. He's come to convict the world of sin. The Holy Spirit comes to the world and convicts them of sin. And notice it doesn't say, sins plural, it says sin, the sin of unbelief. It's the Holy Spirit who is moving in the world, not showing them, oh, you messed up, oh, you were wrong, oh, you did this, oh, that was bad. No, he comes to them to convince them that they are sinners in need of a savior, that they are lost, lonely and broken, that Jesus came and died for them. In fact, when you got saved it wasn't because you just had an ideated light bulb like I need a savior, it was the Holy Spirit who convinced you that you are lost, lonely and broken and Jesus died for you. That is a great thing in Jesus' name. And we should be incredibly grateful that the Holy Spirit convicts the world of the sin of unbelief and points them to Jesus. Now, jump with me to the last one in regard to judgment because the prince of this world now stands condemned. The Holy Spirit comes to convict or convince us that Satan has already been defeated on the cross of Jesus, that greater is he that is in us than he that is in this world.

If all authority in heaven and earth belongs to Jesus, then Satan no longer has any. He comes to convince us of that. Now, in regard to righteousness which means right standing with God, not right behavior, right standing with God. Because I am going to the Father, Jesus finished his work on the cross, went to the Father and sat down because it is finished and we are forever made right with God, where you can see me no longer. He's talking to the disciples. So what he is saying in this moment is that the Holy Spirit comes into the life of believers to convict or convince them of their righteousness with God. This is so important. The Holy Spirit is not a nag. He is not an overbearing authority figure. He's not a controlling parent. He doesn't show up in your life and say, don't do this, I can't believe you did that, you should be ashamed of yourself, oh, that, oh, that, that.

If that's what you think the Holy Spirit does, no wonder we keep our distance from Him. Can I tell you who does that? Satan. He's the ultimate counterfeit, the ultimate impostor. In fact, his name is the accuser. That literally what it means. All he wants to do is accuse you and he wants to deceive you in a way that makes you think that's the Holy Spirit, that that's what conviction is and it's like, I want nothing to do with that. But the Holy Spirit's name is Helper, Counselor, Comforter, Guide, and He comes into your life to convince you that you have been made right with God through Jesus. So even in your moments when you are actively sinning, it's the Holy Spirit who is there trying to convince you to say, you know, even right now you are God's beloved son or daughter in whom He's well pleased. Do you know that Jesus literally became that sin so that you could become his righteousness? Do you know He has fully

forgiven you and has completely removed your sins from you as far as the east is from the west? That's what the Holy Spirit is doing.

He's literally the Spirit of Truth and He is guiding you into truth. Remember, to sin means to miss the mark. And the Holy Spirit, when we miss the mark, is showing us, hey, Jesus has already nailed the bull's eye. Don't forget who you are and what he has done and what that now means for your life. He is always guiding us away from sin towards the righteousness that we already have and that's what empowers us to live righteously. In fact, this is why it says, "Awake to righteousness, and sin not." If we will awake to who we are in God, we don't want to sin anymore. We become empowered to live free of it. And this is what the Holy Spirit is trying to do, to awaken you to who you now are in Jesus and that empowers you to live the character of Jesus.

You see, the more we walk with the Holy Spirit the less we enjoy sin.

The more you taste the fruit of the Spirit, the less you want to eat the works of the flesh. And so as we walk with the Holy Spirit, sin no longer tastes good. It no longer feels good, it no longer sits well in us, it starts to grieve us, it starts to violate our conscience, it starts to bother us, and that is the Holy Spirit guiding you into all truth. That's Him teaching you all things. That's Him counseling you on the ways of freedom.

You see, one of the criticisms that I've gotten a lot throughout the years is that I don't spend enough time preaching against sin. It's an interesting criticism. I understand where it's coming from. The person that usually gives it, they are against sin and so am I. And so is God.

The difference is how we get to righteous living. In their mind, it's the more we preach against sin the less people will sin. The problem with that is when you hear more about what you're not supposed to do, it actually makes you want to do it more. And if you actually read the Bible, the Bible is very clear on how we're now supposed to live on what is sin and what is not sin. And most people when they come in and gather, especially on a day like Mother's Day, let's be honest most people as they come in they already come in with a sense of condemnation, guilt and shame. Like I would bet if you check out in this message, you already feel pretty bad about yourself. You already feel pretty bad about your life. And so if I got 30 minutes with most of you, maybe one, two, three a month on average, I don't want to spend my time telling you what not to do, I want to spend my time telling you who you now are in Jesus.

Because think about this, the moment that you get saved you have a new nature, you're a new creation, you have a new identity. The Spirit of the Living God now dwells in your core, which means you now actually long to please God. If you're saved, it means you actually want to do the right thing, that you actually want to walk with God and move in His life. And so why would we spend our time preaching against your old nature that's now gone? It's like a caterpillar

that becomes a butterfly, and that butterfly still crawls around in the mud. I wouldn't spend all my time telling the butterfly, stop crawling in the mud, stop crawling in the mud, get out of the mud, stop crawling in the mud. No, I would say, hey, do you know you can fly? Do you know you have wings? That if you would spread them they would catch the breeze and you would be able to go places and do things and experience things unlike anything you've ever seen before?

Come on, this is why the Bible says, "Count yourselves dead to sin and alive to Christ." If I'm going to be counted dead to sin, why do I want to spend all my time talking about not sinning? I want to spend my time talking about being alive to Christ. I've been crucified with Christ, it's no longer I who live, it's Christ who lives within me. Sin is no longer your master because you're not under the law, you're now under grace, right? Like it changes what we're talking about and faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. So whatever I'm hearing, my faith in that thing grows. We all need our faith to grow in the righteousness of God, so I want to partner with what the Holy Spirit is already doing in your life and speaking to you and calling that to the surface because it gets buried down by the flesh and the things of this world. This is why when Paul writes to the Ephesians, he doesn't say, to the sinners at Ephesus.

Some of us are like, yeah, that's what he should. To the sinners of Valley Creek. No? To the saints of Ephesus. Knowing that they have active struggles in their lives, but they've got a Guide, a Counselor, a Comforter, a Holy Spirit dwelling within them, changing them from the inside out, getting those cats out of there. Just saying. Just saying. Hey dads, happy Father's Day to you, for giving you this cat thing to go home with. Here's the problem for us. Most of us prefer remorse over repentance. Remorse is unrepented guilt. It's just like, I would rather feel bad about myself, I would rather just kind of be like, yeah, I'm sorry I got caught, I'm sorry that there's consequences. That's called worldly sorrow.

And most of us would rather live in that. Like the shame-fear-control cycle. I did something wrong, I feel ashamed about it, and so now I'm afraid, so I'm going to control you and everything around me. But then I got more shame and it just kind of lives in the cycle. I'd rather just live in that. Tell me how bad I am because I already know, I'd rather -- as opposed to conviction, repentance and freedom. Conviction from the Spirit of the Living God, who I am, repenting, changing my mind and my direction and now living in freedom and then actually wanting more conviction and repentance and freedom because the Holy Spirit does not come to shame you, He has come to free you in Jesus' name. Come on. In fact, this is why this verse is mind blowing. This is God, He says, "I will give you a new heart and put a new Spirit in you." You got a new nature, a new identity. You're a new creation. You're a butterfly even if you like hanging out in the mud. "I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh and -- ready -- I will put my Spirit in you and I will move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."

In other words, God puts His Spirit in us and that Spirit empowers us and gives us a desire to move towards the things of God. That's who you are. That's what the Spirit is. And that's what we're calling to the surface in Jesus' name. This is what it looks like to be convicted of righteousness. That I don't have to live down to that anymore. It's already been paid for in Jesus' name. I don't have to live in bondage. I don't have to live like the world. I've been set free to have the character of Jesus. And I need the Spirit to be my guide to show me how to actually walk it out.

You see, at some point you have to decide whether or not you believe the Spirit that's for you is greater than the flesh that's against you. At some point you have to decide whether or not you believe the Spirit in you wants to obey God more than the flesh that's against you wants to rebel against God.

He's given you a new heart and He's given you a new Spirit. You see, the Holy Spirit doesn't empower us to sin, He empowers us to overcome sin. He empowers us to live a holy life with the character of Jesus. If the Holy Spirit dwells inside of us, then holiness should begin to emerge from our lives. Holiness is not about what you can't do, it's about what you're now empowered to do. And He empowers you to think differently, live differently, act differently, believe differently, speak differently from the world around you, to live in the freedom of the Spirit instead of the bondage of the flesh.

The character of Jesus matters. It matters in your marriage. It matters in your home. It matters in work and school and your destiny and our church and the city. And God has given you His Spirit to produce that fruit in your life if you will simply submit and surrender to Him. You see, we couldn't rush on from this because we need to be cut to the heart over this and say, Holy Spirit, I am hungry and humble for you. Holy Spirit, I invite you in. Will you turn over tables in my life?

Will you show me the places of compromise that have become normal? Would you set me free from the works of the flesh? Would you produce the character of Jesus, the fruit of the Spirit in my life? Holy Spirit, we acknowledge our desperate dependence upon you. We need you to change us from the inside out. And we say, we are a family who will walk in the character of Jesus through the empowerment of the Spirit of the Living God. Holy Spirit, we invite you in, in Jesus' name we pray, amen.