

RICK JAMES

THIRSTY

A DEVOTIONAL ON LIVING A SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

14 self-study devotions

Thirsty

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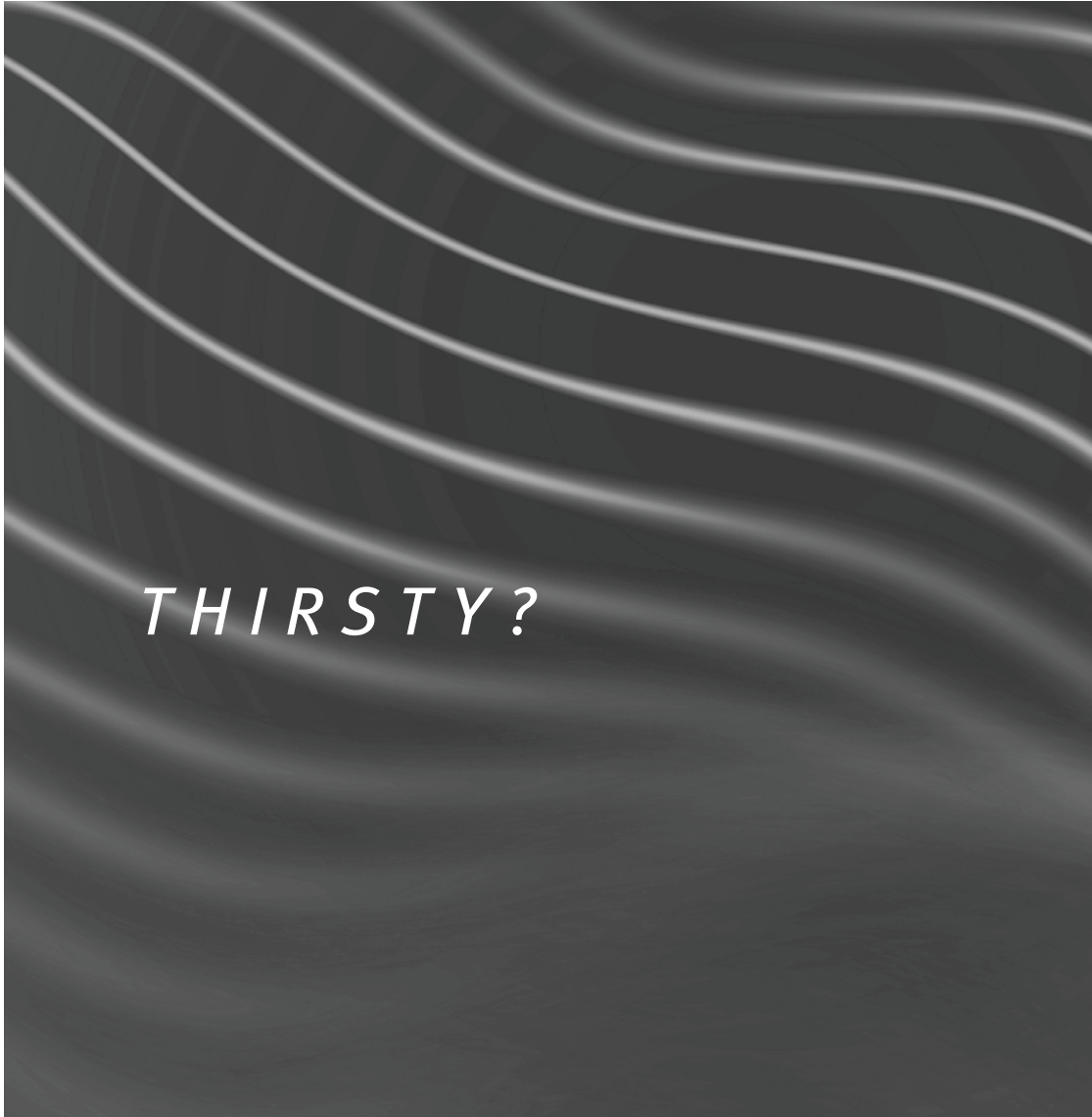
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THIRSTY?

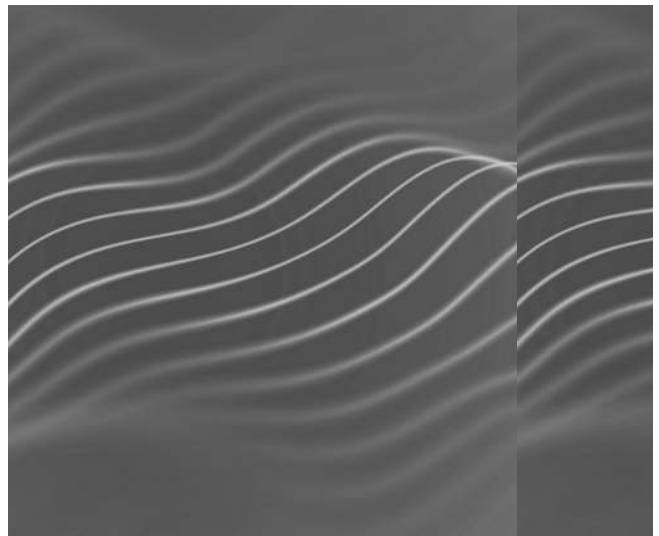
INTRODUCTION

Have you ever felt that this can't be all there is—that somehow there must be something deeper, something more to the Christian life? Something you don't need to act out but a palpable source of energy and life flowing from the heart? Not behavior modification by your own effort and discipline but life transformation through God's power? Jesus clearly taught that there was when he said, "if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." John goes on to tell us, "By this he meant the Spirit" (John 7:37-39). According to Jesus, the Holy Spirit is the source of that "something more," the source of what's missing.

The phrase Jesus used, "living water," was meant to evoke, among other Scriptures, Jeremiah 2:13: "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water."

But even if we didn't know Jeremiah 2:13, we could have understood Jesus' implication by his use of the phrase "living water." Sounds poetic, even mystical, doesn't it? But Jesus didn't use the term "living water" poetically or mystically. Living water was another term for freshwater, the stuff you use to water plants and animals, grow crops, clean dishes—the stuff you drink to live. And, importantly, it stands in opposition, not to stagnant (dead) water, but to saltwater.

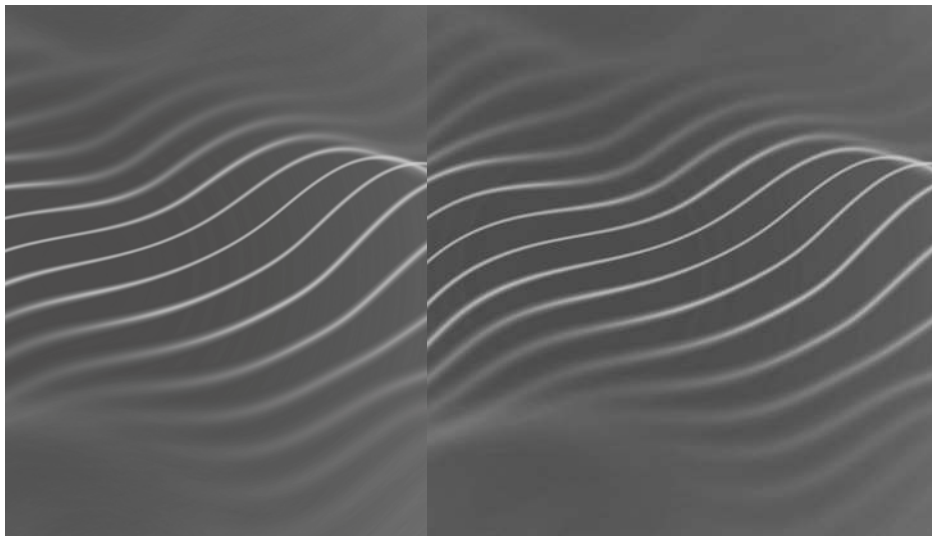
Saltwater looks and feels like fresh, or living, water, but if you drink it for any length of time, it kills you. A person could be stranded in the middle of the ocean floating atop a gazillion gallons of it and die of thirst. The more you drink saltwater, the thirstier you get. If there's a better picture for sin,



please stop me at any point.

And so here we are again, back at the basic meaning of Jeremiah 2:13. It's not just that our souls need living water or we'll die of spiritual thirst; it's that we're dying of thirst because we drink from alternative wells, chugging down saltwater instead of fresh. What our souls thirst for is Christ, whom we experience by the Spirit.

Like the body, the soul can't go very long without water. And so everyone, most every day, gets thirsty, as experienced in innumerable forms: insecurity, unforgiveness, meaninglessness, loneliness, hopelessness, emptiness, boredom, dissatisfaction, worry, anxiety, and so on. Our souls are constantly crying out for something to drink. So we drink.



But all temporal forms of refreshment (sex, drugs, success, fame, busyness, entertainment, travel, materialism) are, in the end, saltwater. In the moment, they taste and feel like water to the lips but they only succeed in making us thirstier. If we persist in drinking them, they are spiritually terminal.

But this isn't the worst tragedy. The greater tragedy by far is that those of us who have come to know Christ continue to drink

the same saltwater that unbelievers drink, though perhaps in more socially acceptable forms.

When we feel the thirst of insecurity, for example, do we turn to the Lord or do we buy clothes, lift weights, clamor for attention, flirt, judge others or put others down, or get jealous?

When we feel the thirst of loneliness or dissatisfaction, do we turn to the Lord or do we eat, watch TV,

play on the computer, fantasize, sleep?

When we need confidence, do we rely upon God or jack ourselves up with music, coffee, nicotine, Red Bull, new clothes, self-talk, cool speech? To what are we turning to satisfy those thirsts?

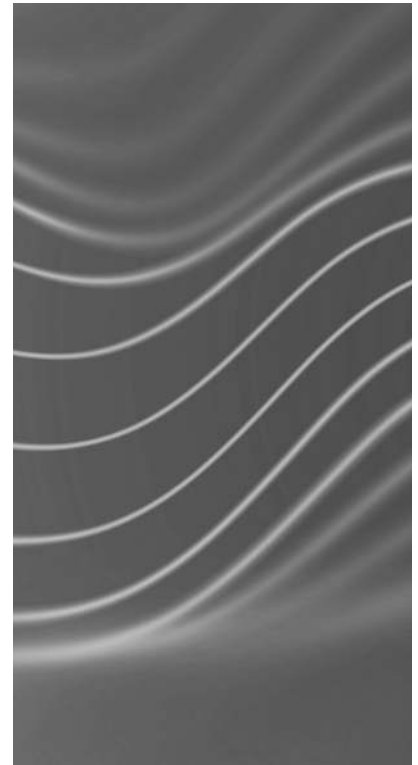
Though we have living water (the Holy Spirit) within us, we satisfy our thirst in much the same ways unbelievers do. Maybe we've stopped having premarital sex or taking illicit drugs—maybe—but that doesn't mean we're not turning to saltwater. In truth, we're often consuming it daily . . . by the gallon.

And this, when you clear everything else away, is at the core of our dissatisfaction and thirst: we are not filled and do not walk with, or drink from, the Spirit in the way we could or should.

Now, it could be that we just don't know any better. Maybe we never even knew the source of living water was within us. Or maybe we thought we were supposed to gut out a godly life in our own strength through discipline and abstinence. Maybe this is all we've ever seen modeled. Whatever the reason, it doesn't matter, because we are going to change all that.

For the next two weeks, we are going to learn what it is to be filled, directed, and empowered by the Spirit. We are going to learn how to drink and satisfy our thirst the way God intended.

This devotional contains three sections. The first focuses on the scriptural and doctrinal foundations of the Spirit-filled life: what the Bible says concerning God's Spirit indwelling us. The second section will look at how we walk in, and experience, the Spirit's empowerment. And the last section explores the practical ways this empowerment overflows in love and service. If you fully engage for the next fourteen days, I guarantee your relationship with Jesus will never be the same.



SECTION ONE:

Indwelt by the Spirit

PERSON

PRESENT

SECURE

EMPOWERED

SECTION TWO:

Influence of the Spirit

WALKING

RELIANCE

LED

ATMOSPHERE

AWAKE

NAKED

SECTION THREE:

Overflow of the Spirit

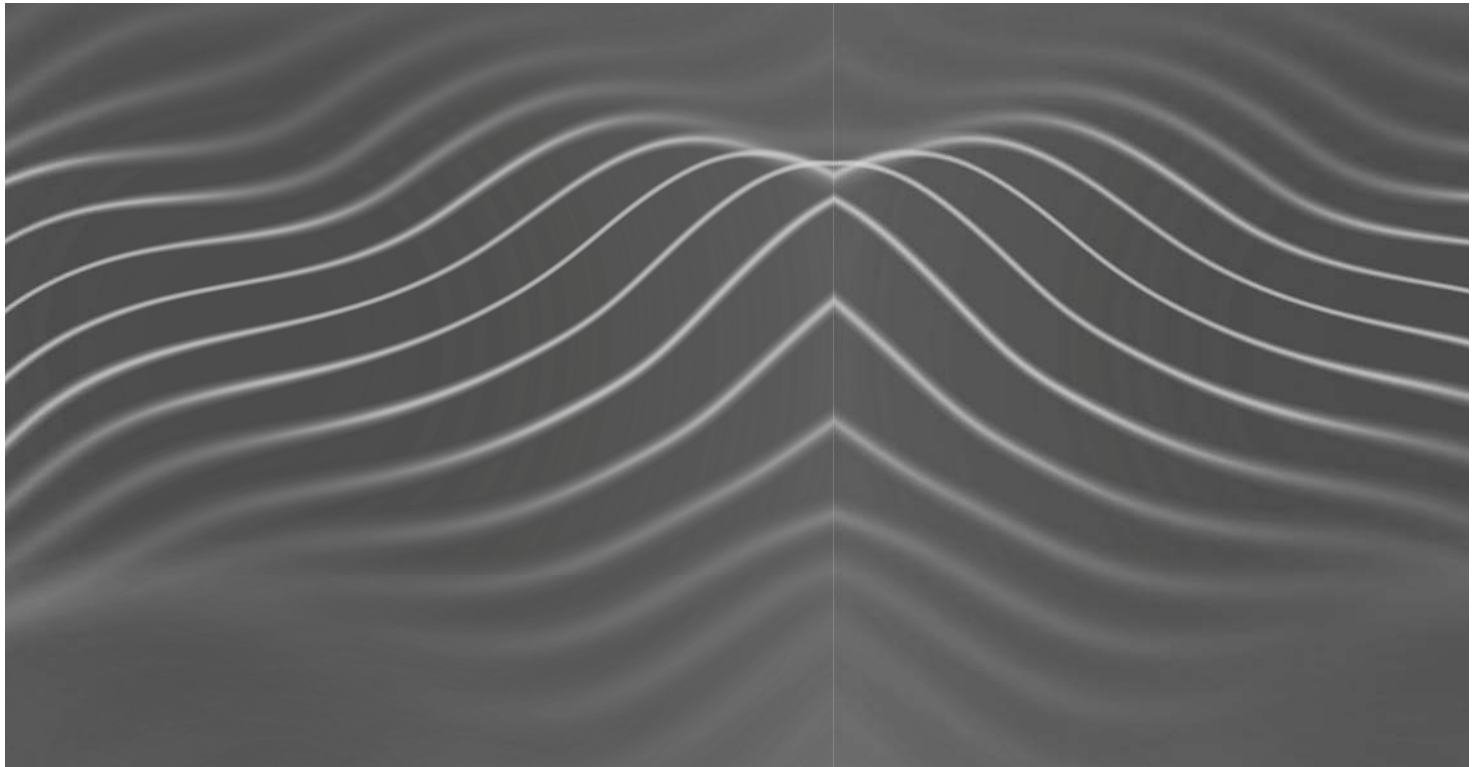
POWER TO WITNESS

POWER FOR HOLINESS

POWER TO SERVE

FATHER, SON, & HOLY SPIRIT

STEPS

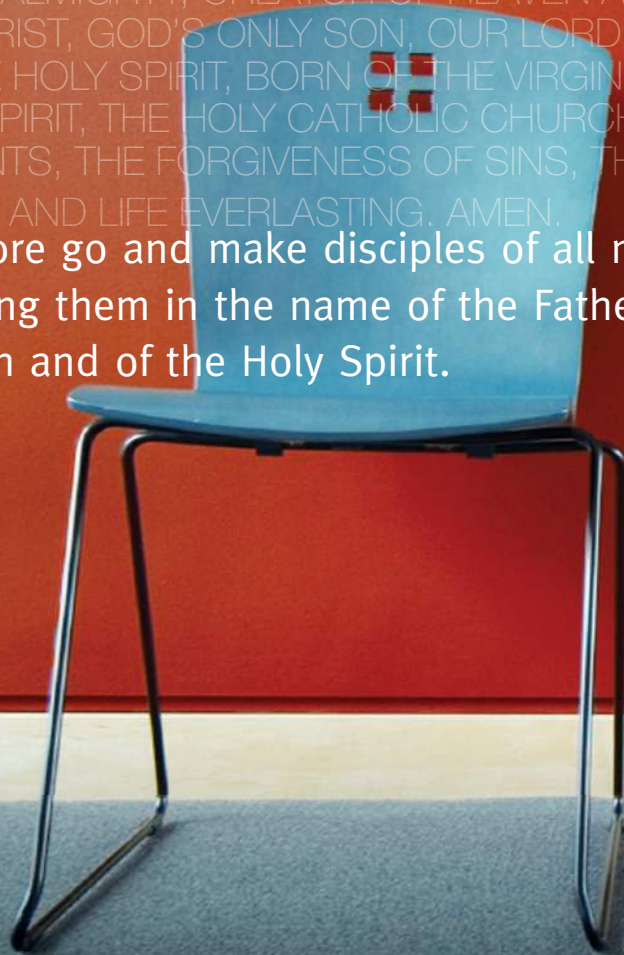


PFRSON

I BELIEVE IN GOD, THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH. I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, GOD'S ONLY SON, OUR LORD, WHO WAS CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY. I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH, THE COMMUNION OF THE SAINTS, THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS, THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY, AND LIFE EVERLASTING. AMEN.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father and of
the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

MATTHEW 28:19





Which image do you think best represents people's general understanding of the Holy Spirit?

In your mind, which images do a lousy job of representing the Holy Spirit's identity? Why?

Which image best represents the Holy Spirit to you? Why that image?

If you had to come up with your own image, what would it be? What do you envision when you think about the Holy Spirit?

What are some of the conceptual distortions about the Holy Spirit pictured in some of the images above?

Why is image 3 so often used when depicting the Holy Spirit?

Introducing the Holy Spirit.

Read John 16:5-15. In this discourse Jesus gives a formal introduction to the third person of the Trinity. Write what you learn from the passage about the Holy Spirit and why he was sent.

The person of the Spirit.

Personhood is not a matter of having feet or eyebrows but rather of having attributes of being such as intellect, agency (the ability to act), will, emotion, and identity. Below are some of the major biblical passages that affirm the unique personhood of the Spirit. Look up each and record what aspect of personhood is described.

Acts 5:3

Romans 15:30

1 Corinthians 2:10; 12:11

Ephesians 4:30

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.

While the identity of the Holy Spirit is not fully revealed until the New Testament, most scholars see inferences about him in Old Testament passages such as Genesis 1:26-27. What Holy Spirit inferences do you see in these opening verses of Scripture?

GOD SAID, "LET US MAKE MAN IN OUR IMAGE, IN OUR LIKENESS, AND LET THEM RULE OVER THE FISH OF THE SEA AND THE BIRDS OF THE AIR, OVER THE LIVESTOCK, OVER ALL THE EARTH, AND OVER ALL THE CREATURES THAT MOVE ALONG THE GROUND." SO GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE, IN THE IMAGE OF GOD HE CREATED HIM; MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM. GENESIS 1:26-27

Is there something to be learned about the nature of God in the nature and creation of man?

Why do you think that God did not fully disclose his triune nature (Trinity) until the coming of Jesus?



The Trinity.

How would you clarify the Trinity to someone who thinks you believe in three gods?

While the term "Trinity" is never used in Scripture, the personhood and deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are clearly taught. If we were to summarize the New Testament doctrine of the Trinity, it would be as follows: God is three distinct persons; each person is fully God; there is one God.

The greatest minds of the last two thousand years have generally conceded that while we can state these three truths with clarity, like the mathematical concept of a fourth spatial dimension or the mystery of human consciousness, the Trinity is beyond our human capacity to perceive or envision.



Flatland. *In 1884, Edwin Abbot wrote “Flatland,” an imaginative story of life in a two-dimensional world. The protagonist is A. Square, and as the name suggests, he’s simply a flat shape—lines on a page. The story illuminates the difficulty of picturing 3-D life for a two-dimensional being. A. Square, for example, can only experience a sphere as a flat circle, for in Flatland the concept of depth is unfathomable. Flatland is still used in math today as a helpful analogy to explain the difficulty of envisioning a fourth spatial dimension.*

Incomprehensible as it may be, there has been no shortage of illustrations offered over the years that attempt to explain the Trinity. To a degree, they are all helpful. But, to a degree, they are all deficient. Below are some of the better known of the illustrations. Look at each, and if you can, write down what it tries to communicate and where the analogy fails.

Water illustrates the Trinity in that it can manifest itself in three forms: liquid, vapor, and ice.

An egg illustrates the Trinity in that it is made up of three constituent parts: shell, egg white, and yolk.

Sex illustrates the Trinity because, in the consummation of marriage, two people, to the extent possible, become one.

A plant illustrates the Trinity, with the Father as the root, the Son as the shoot that breaks forth into the world, and the Spirit as that which spreads beauty and fragrance.

A person illustrates the Trinity in the union and interdependence of intellect, emotion, and will.



As these illustrations are not all equal in their descriptive insight, which do you find most helpful?

The Trinity is one of many mysteries surrounding God that can freeze the brain when pondered too long. What other mysteries about God do you wrestle with?

How all three persons comprise one God may not be as clear as we’d like. What is clear is that the doctrine of the Trinity is true and that each member of the Trinity plays a distinct role in our salvation, for we “have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood” (1 Peter 1:2). It is also clear that the mission and ministry of the Spirit are to bring glory to the Son. The Spirit labors in us to focus our mind, affections, worship, and service toward “our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

What I know now.

Since we’ve touched on some abstract ideas, try to process the content through answering these two questions:

How I viewed the Holy Spirit in the past:

How I view him now:



I AM WHO I AM ADONAI JEHOVA ROPHE GOD AL-
MIGHTY FATHER LORD ELOHIM EL SHADDAI EL
ELYON YESHUA FIRST AND LAST ALPHA AND
OMEGA LIVING GOD EL ROI HOLY ONE GREAT
SHEPHERD LORD OF HOSTS GOD MOST HIGH
EVERLASTING GOD KURIOS WORD MAKER GOD
ONLY WISE REDEEMER ADONAI AVINU CREATOR
HOLY GLORY ETERNAL IMMANUEL

PRESENT

And in him you too are being built together to become
a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

EPHESIANS 2:22

OKAY, SO YOU ENTER A ROOM AND THERE YOU FIND THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE: TWO POWERFUL POLITICAL FIGURES (BARACK OBAMA AND MAYBE HILLARY CLINTON), A COUPLE OF SPORTS ICONS (LIKE TOM BRADY AND TIGER WOODS), YOUR TWO FAVORITE MUSICIANS (LET'S SAY DAVE MATTHEWS AND BEYONCE), AND TWO ACTORS WHO DEFINE BEAUTY (SUCH AS BRAD PITT AND ANGELINA JOLIE). THAT'S THE SCENARIO. NOW . . .

Whose presence would you find most intimidating?

How would you feel in his or her presence? Why?

Which inspires a greater sense of awe in you: being in the presence of beauty, power, genius, or talent? Why?

Now imagine what it would be like to stand in the presence of God. Write down the first five words that come to your mind ("Terrifying"? "Blinding"?).

Were your initial thoughts physical (the appearance), emotional (exciting, terrifying), or spiritual (unworthy, guilty)? Why, do you think?

How do these thoughts or feelings differ from those that come from being in the presence of celebrities?

Old Testament encounters.

Look up the following verses and make notes of three things: What does God communicate about himself? What does he use to communicate it? What emotions might be evoked by that particular demonstration of his character?

The Israelites' experience: Exodus 19:9-20

Moses' experience: Exodus 33:14—34:8

Elijah's experience: 1 Kings 19:9-13

The story of God's presence and the temple.

From the time Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, God's presence had dwelled with them in a unique way. A portable tent, or tabernacle, was erected for God's residence among them. And yet it wasn't until some 450 years after their Red Sea crossing that King David's son Solomon built a permanent structure in Jerusalem, a temple, to be the earthly focal point of God's dwelling among his people. Upon the completion of the temple, there was an inauguration ceremony that concluded with Solomon praying as follows:



NOW ARISE, O LORD GOD, AND COME TO YOUR RESTING PLACE, YOU AND THE ARK OF YOUR MIGHT. MAY YOUR PRIESTS, O LORD GOD, BE CLOTHED WITH SALVATION, MAY YOUR SAINTS REJOICE IN YOUR GOODNESS. O LORD GOD, DO NOT REJECT YOUR ANOINTED ONE. REMEMBER THE GREAT LOVE PROMISED TO DAVID YOUR SERVANT.

WHEN SOLOMON FINISHED HIS PRAYER, FIRE CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN AND CONSUMED THE BURNT OFFERING AND THE SACRIFICES, AND THE GLORY OF THE LORD FILLED THE TEMPLE.

THE PRIESTS COULD NOT ENTER THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD BECAUSE THE GLORY OF THE LORD FILLED IT. WHEN ALL THE ISRAELITES SAW THE FIRE COMING DOWN AND THE GLORY OF THE LORD ABOVE THE TEMPLE, THEY KNELT ON THE PAVEMENT WITH THEIR FACES TO THE GROUND, AND THEY WORSHIPED AND GAVE THANKS TO THE LORD, SAYING, "HE IS GOOD; HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER." 2 CHRONICLES 6:41—7:3

All in all, a pretty wild demonstration of God's power as his presence filled the temple. And, by the way, this was a one-time performance. While God's presence continued to dwell in the temple throughout Israel's history, it was only at the inauguration (the grand opening so-to-speak) that we witness such a dramatic scene—God visibly demonstrating that his presence now dwelled in the temple among his people. Another event wouldn't occur like this until after Jesus had been raised. And it's that event that we want to look at next.

The new temple. Read Acts 2.

Pentecost was a Jewish harvest festival celebrating the firstfruits of the coming harvest. How does this backdrop aid our understanding of the event?

Why do you think God chose speaking in different languages as a sign of his presence among the church?

What other tangible results or outworkings of the Spirit's presence do you see in this chapter?

How were the disciples different as a result of the Spirit's presence?

In light of the fear and awe associated with God's presence throughout Israel's history, how do you think the disciples felt when they realized that **they** were the new temple? (Excited? Paranoid?)

According to God’s Word, the moment you trusted Christ, the Holy Spirit was given to you and indwells you. You are now God’s temple. “You also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 1:13).

Like the filling of the Jerusalem temple, the Pentecost event in Acts 2 was a unique display of God’s empowering presence. Typically, our experience of God’s indwelling lacks this supernatural commotion. Rather, this is something we are to take by faith in what Scripture has promised, and what it’s promised is that God lives in you and will never leave.



As best you can remember, when did you place your faith in Christ? What were the circumstances surrounding your decision?

As you let your mind mull over this fact—that through the Holy Spirit, God actually indwells you—what are some of the immediate implications that come to mind?

Tracing the word “filled” in a single chapter of Acts sheds light on the way in which we feel and experience the Spirit’s presence:

Saul, who was also called Paul, FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT . . .
When the Jews saw the crowds, THEY WERE FILLED WITH JEALOUSY. . . .
The disciples WERE FILLED WITH JOY AND WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT. ACT 13:9, 45, 52, EMPHASIS ADDED


How is being filled with the Spirit similar to be filled with joy or jealousy? How is it different?

Why do you think God makes his influence and presence so subtle in our lives, working in concert with our own thoughts and emotions rather than overriding them?

How have you experienced or felt the Spirit’s presence or influence in your life since becoming a Christian?

What variables might affect how much you feel or experience the Spirit’s influence? Put another way, are there things you can do to increase or decrease the Spirit’s influence upon your thoughts and actions?

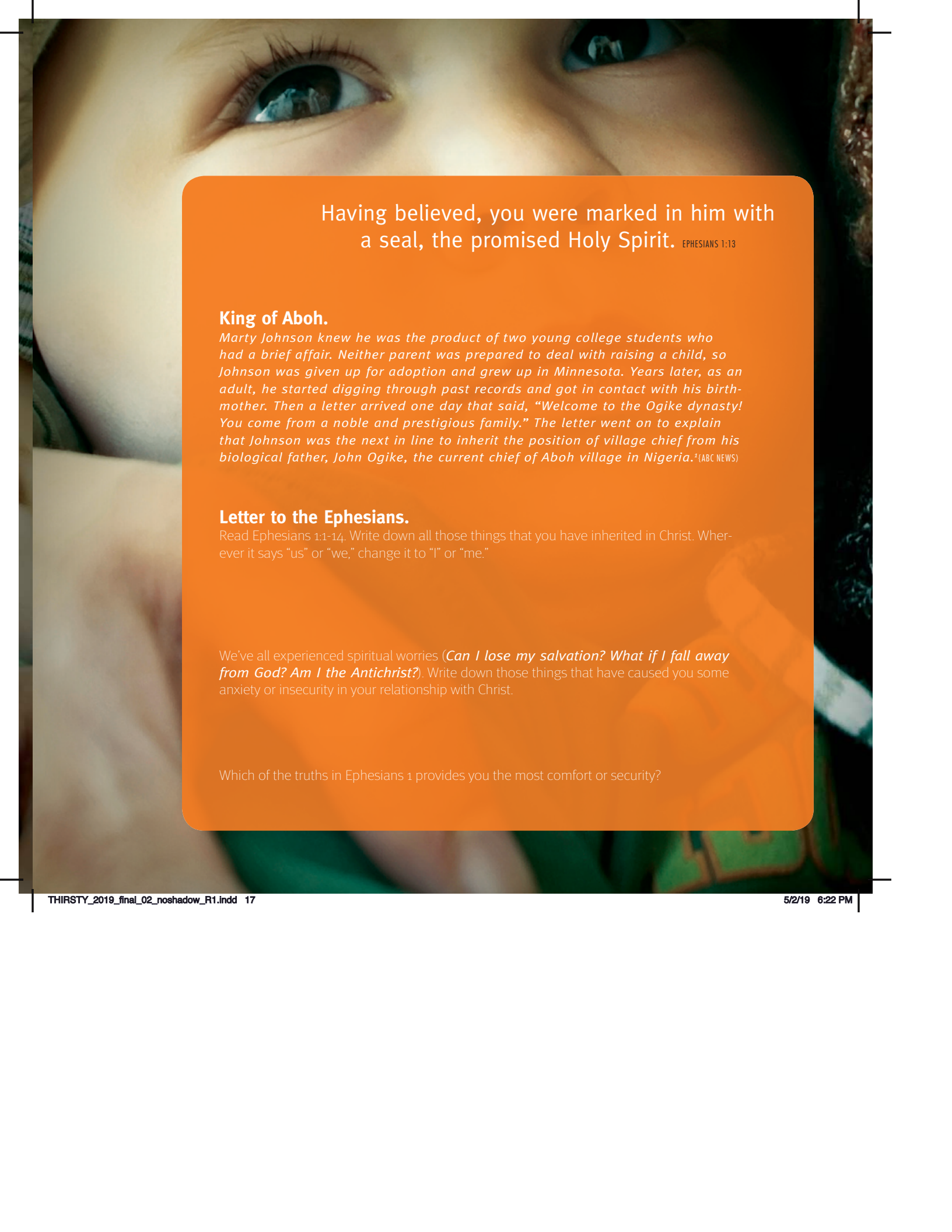
As the Lord indwells you, your life is now his home. What about your life right now do you think Jesus would want to change to make his new temple more of a “holy dwelling”?



He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. 2 CORINTHIANS 1:21,22

SECURE

WE HAVE FORGIVENESS OF SIN
WE HAVE BEEN MADE HOLY
WE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE
WE HAVE REDEMPTION
YOU ARE HOLY AND CHOSEN
YOU ARE BLESSED
YOU ARE ALL SONS OF GOD
YOU ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD
YOU ARE LIGHT IN THE LORD
YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED BY GRACE
YOU HAVE BEEN RECONCILED
YOU HAVE FULLNESS IN CHRIST
YOU HAVE BEEN SET FREE

A close-up photograph of a child's eyes, looking upwards and to the right. The eyes are light-colored and framed by dark eyelashes. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a green patterned fabric.

Having believed, you were marked in him with
a seal, the promised Holy Spirit. EPHESIANS 1:13

King of Aboh.

Marty Johnson knew he was the product of two young college students who had a brief affair. Neither parent was prepared to deal with raising a child, so Johnson was given up for adoption and grew up in Minnesota. Years later, as an adult, he started digging through past records and got in contact with his birth-mother. Then a letter arrived one day that said, "Welcome to the Ogike dynasty! You come from a noble and prestigious family." The letter went on to explain that Johnson was the next in line to inherit the position of village chief from his biological father, John Ogike, the current chief of Aboh village in Nigeria.⁴ (ABC NEWS)

Letter to the Ephesians.

Read Ephesians 1:1-14. Write down all those things that you have inherited in Christ. Whenever it says "us" or "we," change it to "I" or "me."

We've all experienced spiritual worries (*Can I lose my salvation? What if I fall away from God? Am I the Antichrist?*). Write down those things that have caused you some anxiety or insecurity in your relationship with Christ.

Which of the truths in Ephesians 1 provides you the most comfort or security?

Yo.

Dalton Conley is a sociologist at New York University. He and his wife, Natalie Jeremijenko, have two children. They recently sought permission with the city of New York to change their four-year-old son's name to Yo Xing Heyno Augustus Eisner Alexander Weiser Knuckles Jeremijenko-Conley. At home, the boy is known as Yo². CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Write out a new name for yourself, perhaps an even longer name than Yo's, that encapsulates what is true of you in Christ. (Think of names like Saved, Loved, or Redeemed, as opposed to Eisner, Weiser, or Knuckles.)

Downpayment.

Ephesians 1:1-14 demonstrates the distinct roles the persons of the Trinity play in your salvation. Describe their differing roles:

Father

Son

Holy Spirit

Ephesians 1:14 states that the Holy Spirit is a "deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession." An insanely powerful passage, if you reflect on the keywords. So let's reflect on the keywords. Try to define what each word means on your own—or look it up. Just pondering a dictionary definition can open up new windows of meaning from the passage.

Deposit

Guarantee

Inheritance

Redemption

Possession

Which do you find most meaningful? How are any of these truths currently changing how you think, believe, act?

Why do you think God wants us to know that we can never lose our relationship with him? Why isn't he concerned that this will give us the freedom to sin more?

Sealed.

In Ephesians 1:13, Paul writes, "Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit." The word 'sealed' has a range of meanings. All of the following images are sealed in some way: