



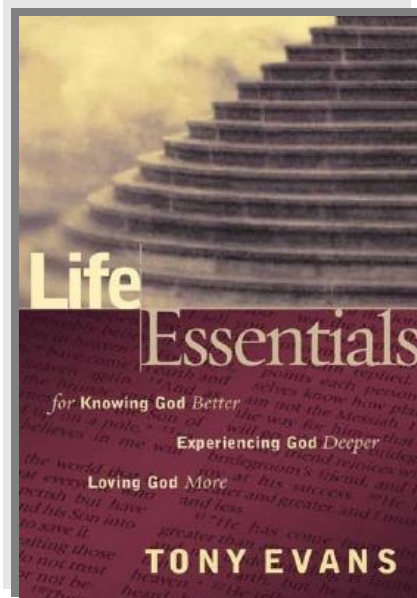
DEAN WELCH - TEACHER

**READY OR NOT? GETTING RID OF OUR
"HOME DEPOT" APPROACH**
[HOLY SPIRIT, SCRIPTURES AND PRAYER]

WEEKLY SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON


MAY 6, 2007

FROM THE *MASTER WORKS* SERIES STUDY OF:



READY OF NOT? GETTING RID OF OUR "HOME DEPOT" APPROACH

[HOLY SPIRIT, SCRIPTURES & PRAYER]

 What is absolutely essential for life? Think for just a second about just the basics of life as I tell a story about a group that thought they had covered all the bases and had everything they needed for an important trip. See if you see yourself anywhere in this true story.

Had you been on the British Coast in 1845 you might have seen two ships boarded by 138 of England's finest sailors setting sail for the Arctic. Their task? To chart the Northwest Passage around the Canadian Arctic to the Pacific Ocean. The captain, Sir John Franklin, hoped this effort would be the turning point in the Arctic exploration. History shows that it was. Not because of its success, but because of its failure. The ships never returned. Every crew member perished. And those who followed in the expedition's path to the pole learned this lesson: **PREPARE FOR THE JOURNEY.**

Apparently, Franklin didn't. Though the voyage was projected to last two to three **years**, he only carried a twelve-day supply of coal for the auxiliary steam engines. But what he lacked in fuel, he made up for in entertainment. Each ship carried a "1,200 volume library, a hand-organ, china place settings for officers and men, cut glass wine goblets and sterling silver flatware."

Was the crew planning for an Arctic expedition or a Caribbean cruise? Judging from the supplies, one would have thought the latter. The sailors carried no special clothing to protect them against the cold. Only the uniforms of Her Majesty's fleet. Noble and respectful, but thin and inadequate. The silver knives, forks, and spoons were as ornate as those found in the dining rooms of the Royal Navy officers clubs: heavy at the handles, intricately designed. Years later, some of these place settings would be found near a clump of frozen, cannibalized bodies.

The inevitable had occurred. The two ships had sailed ill-prepared into the frigid waters. Ice coated the deck, the spars, and the rigging. The sea froze around the rudder and trapped the ship. The sailors set out to search for help, wearing their uniforms and carrying their belongings. Inuit Indians reported seeing a group dragging a wooden boat across the ice. For the next 20 years, remains of the expedition were all over the frozen sea. The boat, or a similar one, was later discovered containing the bodies of 35 men. Other Indians discovered a tent on the ice and in it, 30 bodies. Franklin died on the boat! Search parties would later find a piece of the backgammon board Lady Jane Franklin had given her husband as a farewell present. Many miles from the vessel, the skeleton of a frozen officer was discovered, still wearing trousers and jacket of "fine blue cloth...edged with silk braid, with sleeves slashed and bearing 5 buttons each." Over his uniform the dead man had worn a blue greatcoat, with a black silk neckerchief.

STRANGE how men could embark on such a journey ill-prepared, more equipped for afternoon tea than for the open sea.

Stranger still how we do the same. Don't Franklin's men remind you of us? We sometimes act as if the Christian life is a retirement cruise. We have little fuel, but lots of entertainment. We are more concerned with looking snappy than with being prepared. We give more thought to the table settings than to surviving the journey. We give little thought to the destination, but we make sure there's plenty of silver to go around.

And so when the freeze comes, we step out on the ice with forks, games, and skimpy clothing and pass our final days walking against the wind, often blaming GOD for getting us into this mess.

But GOD is not to blame. If we sail unprepared it's in spite of - not because of - God. He left detailed instructions about this voyage. His Word is our map; the **HOLY SPIRIT** is our compass. He outlined the route and described the landmarks we should

seek. He even told us what to pack for the trip: LOVE, JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE, KINDNESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS, SELF-CONTROL. **Galatians 5:22-23**

Listen to these words from **JOHN 14:2-3**, "*There are many rooms in my Father's house; I would not tell you this if it were not true. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And after I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me so that you may be where I am.*" Look again at Verse 2, "*I would not tell you this if it were not true.*" Why did he say that? Did he see doubt in the heart of the disciples? Did he read confusion on their faces? I don't know what he saw in their eyes. But I know what he sees in ours.

He sees what the airline attendant sees when she gives her pre-flight warnings. He sees what doctors often see when they tell their patients to stop smoking. He sees what ministers see when they tell a Sunday morning audience that each one of them could die today. "*Yeah, sure. But probably not.*" We don't say the words. But we think them. Sure, this plane could crash, but then again it probably won't. *So rather than listen, I'll read my magazine. Sure I could die of cancer, but then again, maybe I won't. So rather than stop smoking today I'll wait awhile. Sure I could die today, but then again...*"

This week Dr. Evans covered three chapters from his book, *Life Essentials*, and talked in depth with us about the essentials for life—water, food and air—also being the life essentials for Christian life and growth. Remember our foundational scripture verse for this study from **2 Peter 3:18 (NASB)**: ¹⁸"*but **GROW** in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*"

We know, hopefully, that at the time of our conversion—that is, when we are "*born again*"—that God sends His comforter and counselor in the form of the Holy Spirit to dwell within us. This is God's great gift to us. Listen to these words from **JOHN 7:37-39 (NLT)**: ³⁷*On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood*

and shouted to the crowds, "Anyone who is thirsty may come to me!"³⁸ "Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.'"³⁹ **(When he said "living water," he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.)** Did you hear that? The Spirit is given to **everyone** believing in Jesus. There's nothing you have to do beyond believe. It's a gift.

See, God knows we can't make it on our own. When we try to depend upon SELF or OTHERS or THINGS, guess what? We fail! We fall flat on our faces? How many times will it take before we realize that God is telling us, *"It's not about ME!"* **JOHN 14:16 (NASB)** is a great reassuring verse to lean on when you wonder where all this power is? Listen to what Jesus told his disciples when He knew they were deeply troubled about Him leaving them physically: *¹⁶"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;*

So, since you **already have** the Holy Spirit within you, you may be asking yourself, "OK, Dean, if as a Christian I already have the Holy Spirit, why am I not experiencing His power?" I love the way Dr. Evans' answers that question in his book. As a matter of fact, it's where I got the title for this lesson today. Dr. Evans says that before we can understand how to get the flow of the Holy Spirit **going** and keep it going, we need to address what he calls the "Home Depot" approach to the Christian life. This is important because we need to learn that the Holy Spirit only **enables** us when we GIVE UP on our own efforts and realize how **disabled** we are without Him.

This weekend, with Beverly gone to visit her father for his birthday, I've had the chance to do some things I have been putting off. You see, I hate going to the local home improvement store, which in my case, is Home Depot. The reason I hate to go is that it's a store for do-it-yourselfers, and having to go there usually means I am messing with something around the house

that would be better left to the professionals. Like this weekend, I decided to repair and fix the floor lamp beside my chair. It's been broken for months and won't turn on. So, as I ventured to the local Home Depot this weekend, I wandered the aisles forever it seemed looking for a replacement lamp socket. Somehow I had managed to take the broken one apart, get it off the floor lamp and to the store to show SOMEONE what I thought I needed. Reluctantly, I finally had to ask for help. Ugh! The store employee took me right to what I needed and even showed me HOW to install it. I did it!

Now, this do-it-yourself approach may be OK for taking care of the lamp or other minor home repairs, **but it doesn't work in the Christian life**. If you could make your own inner being FLOW with living water, you wouldn't need the Holy Spirit. His energy would not be necessary. Remember what Jesus said in **JOHN 15:5** (I LOVE THIS), *"Apart from Me you can do nothing!"* See, when Christ saved us, He gave us Someone to lean on who has the strength to hold us up. He gave us the Holy Spirit because He knows the number that sin has done on us. The Spirit is the divine enabler for spiritual growth.

Please, remember what I'm saying here today: It's not about YOU—or ME—but about Christ within us living as the HOLY SPIRIT. Don't—I repeat Don't—stop here and say, *"OK, Dean, I'm going to try hard and do my best to grow as a Christian."* What you need to do is QUIT trying so hard and become, as Dr. Evans reminds us, *"intoxicated with the Holy Spirit."* This reminds me of the times I get indigestion and reach for a little packet containing two tablets and drop them in a glass of water. PLOP! PLOP! FIZZ! FIZZ!! Those tablets start to fizz because they are releasing power to solve my problem. The power in those tablets is in concentrated form, so it has to be released by coming into contact with the water. When that happens, an explosion occurs in the glass and that plain glass of water is now loaded with power to cure my upset stomach! WOW!

So, when you receive the Holy Spirit at your salvation, you received *"Holy Ghost concentrate."* The Spirit was placed in you in concentrated form, but when His power comes in contact with your submission to Him and willingness to be filled, an **EXPLOSION** occurs that cures your spiritual indigestion and empowers you to pull off great things.

If being filled with the Holy Spirit is the KEY to our growth and power as a Christian, HOW does a person experience the Spirit's filling? This is answered in the verses that follow the command of **Ephesians 5:18**. Listen to verse 18, followed by verses 19-21 (NASB): *¹⁸And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; ²⁰always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; ²¹and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.* Did you see that? These verses talk about the MEANS to being Spirit-filled rather than the results. Paul's concern here is to tell us HOW to be filled and keep being filled with—controlled by—the Holy Spirit.

Say you left church today full of the Spirit because you were in God's presence with God's people, communing with Him, but when you go out tomorrow (Monday) and start dealing with people in our sin-soaked world, your experience can get depleted in a hurry. Can you identify with that? Me too! The real world is tough, so how do we get the *"refueling"* we need on Monday or Tuesday or any other day of the week? It's just like filling up your car with gasoline and then the minute you drive away it starts being depleted and used up. Ugh! And at \$3.00 a gallon almost.

When your gas tank gets empty, you have to go back to the gas station and get another round of fuel. You can't live at the gas station and you can't just fill up once a week—or you may be doing a lot of walking with gas can in hand. Same thing with our spiritual growth, if we wait until next Sunday to get refilled, I won't be able to make it through the week. We need to learn to

draw on the Spirit's filling on a day-by-day basis. We do this as we continue to commune with God by making decisions in accordance with His Word.

But, let's make a crucial distinction here between the Spirit's filling and illustrations like gasoline. When your gas tank gets empty, you have to replace it with another round of fuel. But if you feel like you are not Holy Spirit-filled, it's not because He left you empty. He doesn't leave your period! Remember what Christ said in the verse from John 14:16, ***16"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever:"*** The depletion of the Spirit's filling that we're talking about is the loss of experience and enjoyment of His full benefits in your daily life. As we said above, the Spirit's filling is not perpetual and must be renewed. We do that by walking by the Spirit—a daily process.

Turn to **Galatians 5:16-17 (NASB)** and follow along: ***16But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.*** And then we learn what the **FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT** is (all from the Holy Spirit within us). Look at verse **22**, ***But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,***

We talked earlier about the essentials of life being water, food and air. We've identified the first essential of our Christian life and growth—the water of the Holy Spirit—so let's move on now to the food and the air. What do you think the **FOOD** is for a Christian? Turn to **MATTHEW 4:4 (NLT)** and let's see how Jesus responded to Satan after His forty day stay in the wilderness. ***4But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"***

Christ clearly stated the connection between spiritual health and the Word of God in this verse. Given the essential part the Word plays in our spiritual growth, it is unfortunate today that the Bible has been reduced to a menu to be studied rather than a nourishing meal to be enjoyed. Please remember that the Word of God is the inspired, inerrant revelation of God (**2 Timothy 3:16; Matthew 5:17-18; Isaiah 55:8-9**). But its purpose is not just to give us information for our heads, but food for the new nature to feed upon so that spiritual growth can be maximized. The Bible, as Dr. Evans tells us, is a book to be eaten and digested, not just read and understood (*Cf., Ezekiel 3: 1-3*).

As we grow, we need food—nourishment—and God’s Word is the same nourishment for our spiritual growth. Listen to these words from the apostle Peter as he urged believers to long for God’s Word. **1 Peter 2:2 (NLT)**, *²Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment,* See, what milk is to a baby’s body, God’s Word is to the soul. It’s the food that fuels healthy spiritual growth—and just like your mama used to tell you, *“If you want to grow you need to eat!”*

How often do you need to eat? (Maybe some a little less than others, eh?) But, it’s the same with our nourishment from God’s Word. It’s important to have a feeding schedule—every day, day in and day out. When you miss a balanced meal or two or three, what happens? You become weaker, right? The same is true with not reading and spending time in God’s Word. We can’t fully benefit from the Word the way we should if we are feeding on substitutes or doing it on a hit-and-miss basis.

The last time I checked, babies don’t drink all the milk they can in two hours on Sunday so they can go the rest of the week without eating. Babies want to eat every few hours. Why? Because their bodies can only store and use so much food at one time. That’s also true of us, which is why we need to eat regularly. We can’t stuff ourselves on Sunday and live off that until the next Sunday.

But that's what many Christians try to do spiritually, and then they wonder why they're not growing.

Think about this example. What would you think if you saw a grown man sucking on a bottle? Well, just as people need to grow up in the eating habits, so should believers. We must continue to grow spiritually through God's Word. Turn to **1 Corinthians 3:1-3 (NLT)** and listen to these words from Paul to the believers in the church at Corinth: *¹Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to spiritual people. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in the Christian life. ²I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren't ready for anything stronger. And you still aren't ready, ³for you are still controlled by your sinful nature. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your sinful nature? Aren't you living like people of the world?*

Why are some Christians still sucking a bottle instead of eating solid food? How do we graduate from milk to meat? A healthy growing diet is balanced and includes vegetables along with steaks and sweets. We need to remember that we are to eat **ALL** of God's Word because it's always good for you even if it doesn't always taste good.

OK, we've talked about water and food, now what about our AIR? Let me ask you, *"Does anyone have to tell you to breathe?"* Why? Turn to **1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NLT)**, *¹⁷Never stop praying.* Listen to the way the **NASB** translation reads: *¹⁷pray without ceasing.* Get the message? Prayer is so important, the Bible tells us to keep on praying. Just as breathing is the link to our earthly existence, PRAYER is the link to our heavenly existence and should come as unconsciously as drawing each breath. Think about this a moment: **IS PRAYER AS EASY AS BREATHING TO YOU?**

I'm convinced God wants our prayers to be. Just like our breathing is the natural expression of our moment-by-moment dependence on oxygen, God wants us to treat our communication with Him the same way. He wants prayer to be the air we breathe, the environment in which we live.

I want to leave you with an encouraging word on prayer that should spur you on to greater growth not only in your prayer life, but in every area of your Christian experience. Listen to these words from **HEBREWS 4:14-16 (NLT)**, three power-packed verses on prayer that, ironically, were written to a group of Christians who had stopped growing and were actually regressing in their spiritual experience. The Hebrews were about ready to give up and turn away from God, but the message of the book is don't quit, press on, and instead of drawing back in unbelief, draw near to God. In this context, listen:

¹⁴So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. ¹⁵This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. ¹⁶So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

WOW! Bottom-line is we have an intercessor in the person of Christ; we have access to God through Christ; we have a sympathetic priest through the passion of Christ; and we can draw near through the provision of Christ. We don't have to hold anything back in prayer. We don't have to wonder if we are wasting our time or if this is doing any good.

How can you have a Savior and High Priest like this and not draw near to Him in prayer no matter what is going on in your life? When you tap into the power of prayer, you will start to grow in leaps and bounds as your new nature grows stronger in the spiritual environment it was made to inhabit.

You say, *"But I'm tired."*

That's OK. Just draw near.

"But you don't understand. I'm hurting and I feel like quitting."

I may not understand, but Jesus does. Draw near to Him. He will meet you where you are and take you where He is before the throne that dispenses grace.

One day during the Civil War, a soldier sat on a bench outside the White House looking distressed. A little boy came by and asked him what was wrong. The soldier said he needed to see President Lincoln, but the guards wouldn't let him in.

Hearing this, the little boy took the soldier by the hand and led him past the guards directly into the president's office. "Father," he said, "this soldier really needs to speak with you." That boy was the president's son, who had direct and continuous access to his father.

No matter what may be happening in your life, Jesus, the Son of God, stands ready to lead you directly into His Father's presence, where there is grace unlimited to meet your needs.

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