

Be filled with Holy Spirit

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This morning when we speak of the name of Jesus, that it is beautiful and that it is powerful, and yet the same Jesus told us in the Gospel of John that his departure, what we know as his ascension, was actually beneficial for us because another would come whom we know as the Holy Spirit that would dwell within us and empower us to live a life that we had never known before. I've got a warning for a lot of us in the room today. Today's message is going to feel very non-Baptist but that's okay because the Holy Spirit is not only in Scripture but it was prophesied of Jesus, the one whose beautiful and powerful name we have sung about and he said that the Holy Spirit would indwell us and empower us to live a life that we could never otherwise live. So for those of you who have been a Baptist nine months longer than you've been alive, would you today pray that you would yield authority to Scripture and not opinion or tradition.

Let's pray.

Lord, as we come this morning, though we are a body of believers and a family of faith, help us, O God, not to celebrate the umbrella of denominationalism or traditionalism or that's how I've always thought about it, or that's just what I've been told. Lord, help us today to see your word for what it says in spite of what we may have been taught, what we may have thought or what others we even like have advocated. Lord, may we submit ourselves to the beautiful powerful name of Jesus who told us that the Holy Spirit would come and because it was actually better for us than if Jesus had stayed. Help us, O God, as we study your word. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the book of Ephesians 5. Now Ephesians 5, there is a very small verse as far as number of words are concerned that we're going to dissect today. We're going to be in Ephesians 5 but we're going to spend the latter half of the message walking through the book of Acts. We're going to start in chapter 4 and make our way through chapter 11, so I just want you to be prepared in advance. We're going to begin in Ephesians 5 but then go into the book of Acts. And if you're a guest or visitor with us this morning, I want to welcome you to a journey that we as a family of faith have been on for some months now, asking ourselves and hopefully answering the question: what does a disciple in Jesus Christ actually look like? What does someone who says they believe in Jesus, that they are a Christian, what does that actually look like? Not what the latest, greatest book says or a seminar says or a series of

lectures say, but what does the word of God, specifically what does Jesus Christ say that his believers and his followers will look like. In fact, kind of the key verse has been John 15:5 where Jesus said, "I am the vine and you are the branches. He that abides in me and I in him shall bear much fruit for apart from me you can do nothing."

Now the last couple of weeks, we've been talking about and dissecting verses dealing with the role of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life. We've talked about the fact that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit; that the Holy Spirit dwells within those of us who call on the name of Jesus. We talked about the fruit of the Spirit; that it's a natural byproduct of yielding to the things of God in our life. It's not that which can be done through works or through effort or through our own energy, it is a natural byproduct of the operation of the Spirit in our lives. And today in Ephesians 5, the Lord is going to give us a very unusual analogy, a very interesting illustration to demonstrate to us what does it look like to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 5, a very simple verse as far as number of words is concerned. It says, "be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Holy Spirit." There is this comparison, you realize, there is this analogy that we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit much like you would see somebody who is drunken with wine. So what I want to do is I've going to take this verse today and even though we're going to draw a lot of illustrations from the book of Acts in a moment, just kind of break and peel away the layers here and see what is the Lord telling us to be or what does it look like to be filled with the Spirit.

I think the first thing that we have to discuss today is this: the difference. The difference between the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives and the power or the filling of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Allow me to illustrate. John 20, Jesus has risen from the dead but he's not yet ascended, in fact, he will not ascend for about another 30+ days, in fact, it's about a month out from his ascension. There in John 20:22, Jesus meets the apostles in the Upper Room and there it says that he breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit." In other words, they received the presence of, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit a month prior to what we know as that famous Pentecost event. And as we studied last week, 1 Corinthians 6, it says, "What? Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is of God, which is in you? You are not your own. You have been bought with a price, therefore, glorify God in your body and your spirit which are the Lord's." And what we see is that when a person comes to an understanding that they have sinned, they have messed up, and that they have rebelled against God and that Jesus Christ and his shed blood, his atonement on Calvary and his eventual resurrection is the only solution for their sin problem, they have called out to him, at the point which you are "saved," you are born again, I believe the Bible makes it clear that you are indwelt with, you receive the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life.

But the Bible even here in Ephesians 5 and other passages uses this phrase about being filled with the Holy Spirit. In fact, one of the verses is in Acts 1:8. Thirty days after the Lord breathed on the disciples, he tells them in Acts 1:8, he goes, "Wait here until," listen to this, "until the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and when the Holy Spirit comes upon you,

you will be my witnesses. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, in the uttermost parts of the earth." So this same Jesus who breathed the Holy Spirit into them now says, "Wait here for the Holy Spirit to come upon you."

What we know is about seven days later in Acts 2, the famous Pentecost event. We know about the 3,000 people who make public decisions, we know about the famous tongue event and the speaking and the hearing of those in their own language, but there in Acts 2:4 with all that has taken place, it says that they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and what we see as an important difference in Scripture, the difference between the presence of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through us.

One of the phrases that I've heard throughout the years is this: that when a person believes on Jesus Christ as their Savior, they get all the Holy Spirit they're ever going to get, the question is how much of you has the Holy Spirit received. Let me unpack that a little bit. I believe that the moment you get saved, the minute you call out to Jesus, you're indwelt with and you have received the Holy Spirit, the presence of God in your life, but over the course of time, just like the apostles did between John 20 and John 2, you yield yourself, you submit yourself, you allow the Lord to move and operate in your life, the Bible speaks of that as being filled with and receiving the power and the movement of the Holy Spirit working in and through us, which is why Ephesians 5 can say this, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." Just like we see somebody whose life begins to change, whose words begin to change, whose mannerisms begin to change because of the influx of intoxication, the same thing happens when we yield ourselves to the Spirit of God, that our words change, our actions change, our desires change, our mannerisms change.

But I think in Ephesians 5 there is a very important distinction that needs to be made. In this analogy, in this comparison, shall we say, the Lord says the one thing that is similar, the one comparison is excess. Just as alcohol when one becomes drunk, they live in excess, there are mannerisms that are above and beyond the norm, the same can be said for the Holy Spirit. And this analogy that is utilized just as words would be spoken that normally would not be, actions would be done that normally would not be, the same amount of excess can be compared to the Holy Spirit. We speak things we would not normally speak and we do things we would not normally do. However, even though there is a comparison, can we just be honest with ourselves and say there is a very clear contrast? When one becomes inebriated, when one becomes intoxicated, when one becomes as Ephesians 5 says, drunk with wine which is excess, it leads to destruction. It leads to destructive behavior. It oftentimes leads to results and consequences that may not even be consciously remembered of the time or the event but are oftentimes less than welcome in reality. Whereas on the contrast, anytime you see anybody, particularly in Scripture, who yields themselves to the movement of the Holy Spirit and is, as the Bible describes, filled with the Spirit of God, the one and the only thing that follows them is life abundantly. That is what follows them. You see things happen of a miraculous nature both in the physical and in the spiritual and we see things occur in their lives that would have never otherwise occurred if they had not yielded themselves to the movement and the power of the Holy Spirit operating in them.

So we see a difference between the presence of the Holy Spirit as a believer in Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit filling us as a believer. We see a distinction in this analogy in Ephesians 5 of the comparison of excess and being and doing things we'd not normally, but a real contrast with the results of destruction versus life everlasting and with abundance which leads to the description. The book of Acts gives us a description, not only beginning with Pentecost, of what it looks like for someone to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Now nine times quantitatively speaking, nine times there is the mention of somebody being filled with the Holy Spirit but today I want to talk about quality. I want to take some of these lives and look at some of these individuals and see what happened when they were "filled with the Holy Spirit" that Ephesians 5 alludes to.

Now a couple of things before we begin this journey through the book of Acts. Every person that we're about to look at, every person we're about to study, is already a believer in Jesus Christ when this event occurs in their life, hence the difference between the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit.

So we're going to begin in Acts 4. Hopefully you have your Bibles with you this morning as we're going to take a journey beginning in Acts 4 and going through Acts 11, five what you might call case studies of what happens when somebody is filled with the Holy Spirit and how they compare to and yet contrast with what Ephesians 5:18 says, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess."

Acts 4. The apostles have been preaching the truth of Jesus Christ. They have been imprisoned for their faith. They have been let out of prison and in Acts 4, the apostles are gathered, primarily one whom we know as Simon Peter. In verse 31 it says, "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness." Now that may not seem significant to you but I want you to think about these apostles, primarily the person of Simon Peter. Think about the night before the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, where were these guys? Only one of them was at the foot of the cross and that was the Apostle John. All the rest had "fled for the hills." In fact, Peter, the same one who at what we call the Last Supper said, "I'll never deny you. I'll never go away from you." In fact, he was so gregarious about his love for the Lord that he actually took a guy's ear off in the garden of Gethsemane to show that he was willing to fight for Jesus. But a few hours later as Jesus was in the dwelling place of the high priest and he was being summoned to a trial that was illegal in every aspect and facet, person after person came up to him and said, "Hey, aren't you with him?" He said, "I don't know what you're talking about." Somebody came to him and said, "Oh, but your dialect has given you away. You're a Galilean, you must be with him." Finally a young lady comes up to Simon Peter and says, "I know you're one of his disciples," to which Simon Peter says, "I've never met the man." Phew, what a declaration as he opened up and saw eye-to-eye the face of Jesus, and yet here Simon Peter not only stands up at the famous Pentecost event and preaches where 3,000 are saved, but it make it very clear here in Acts 4 that when they were filled with the Holy Spirit, they spoke with boldness.

Let's use the analogy of Ephesians 5:18. How many times have we known somebody in some situation that once they allowed the alcohol to flow in their lives, once they allowed inebriation to settle in, they said some things they would not otherwise say? How many times have those thoughts or those ideas or those concerns that they held privately at their office all of a sudden are verbalized at the office Christmas party because the liquid courage is starting to flow? Their mouths began to speak some things they would not otherwise speak. If they were sober, they would not dare share their opinion but once they become intoxicated, here come the verbiage. Yet we see the same analogy with Simon Peter and with the apostles, that in their flesh they do not want to associate with one who sends them right back to jail, but when filled with the Holy Spirit they not only speak up the name of Jesus, they say, "We came back from jail and we'll go back if necessary." So when we're filled with the Holy Spirit, it allows us, it causes us to speak on behalf of or declare the things of God when we would not normally or naturally in our flesh desire to do so. It changes the words that come out of our mouths.

Fast forward a couple of chapters to the right to the book of Acts 6. In Acts 6, there is a situation that has arisen in the early church. There is a group of individuals labeled widows, and I know most of us understand the definition of a widow, but in this case they not only were without husband but most likely did not have a son in their family that was a believer or readily possibly available to help them with the physical needs of housing and food and clothing and such, and it's becoming a burden on the church. It's becoming a burden on the faith family here in the early congregation of the church, so much so that they decide to appoint seven individuals to help out with the situation.

Now I want you to notice in verse 3 of Acts 6 how they decide who's going to take care of these individuals. It says, "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit," and there is the rest of the other six names. Now here's the thing I want you to notice about this passage. These individuals, these men who were selected for this opportunity of service, these would have been the movers and the shakers. In our vernacular today, these would have been the business owners and the proprietors. These were the ones who had access to resources and they were sharp mentally and emotionally and they knew what they were doing, but yet that's not the qualification that is said, it says they were full of the Holy Spirit. You see, one of the things that the filling with the Holy Spirit will do in our lives is it will allow us, allow me to say, it will cause us to do things completely backwards than we normally would.

Allow me to use the illustration of Ephesians 5:18. Have you ever known anybody who is quiet, docile, kind of keeps to themselves, but you begin to let the alcohol flow and all of a sudden they are the happiest drunk you've ever seen in your life? Or how about somebody who is all smiles but as soon as the alcohol begins to flow, they become what we call an angry drunk? What happens is they become the opposite of how they naturally behave or how they naturally respond in a situation. Can we just be honest with ourselves this morning, guys? This is not natural. It is not natural for a man to say, "I'll do the

dishes." It is not natural for a man to say, "I'll clean up after everybody else." It is natural for a man to say, "Hey, I'm in charge. I'll take the lead. Let's roll." Not to say, "I'm going to take a back seat and make sure..." Listen, it is not natural for humanity to say, "The good of the whole is better than the desire of the one." It's not natural and what we see here is the reason these individuals behaved the way they did is because the Holy Spirit was filling them and they were willing to serve rather than to be served, just like inebriation which is in excess causes oftentimes people to be different than they normally are.

Fast forward to chapter 7. We meet a man by the name of Stephen. This will be the very first, what we know, Christian martyr. This will be the man who allows himself to be stoned for his faith. He is going to stand up in the face of opposition both verbal and physical opposition. Verse 54 of Acts 7, it says, "When they heard these things," by the way, these things are Stephen's sermon to them, "they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of the Father." In the passage of Scripture where Stephen, the first Christian who is martyred, takes place, it says that his martyrdom took place simultaneously, or shall we say as a result of the power of the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Holy Spirit in his life and he was willing to stand up in an environment where our flesh would not naturally do so.

In just a few moments, I'm going to share some stories to use as illustrative material for Ephesians 5:18 in light of these passages in the book of Acts and I want to make it very clear that these stories in no way are glamorizing inebriation and intoxication or drunkenness, but some years ago, I found myself as a freshman at college and the school that I attended, they didn't do the fraternity Greek system your first semester, you had to wait until your second semester of your freshman year, and I'm just going to be honest with you: I wasn't interested in it at all. It was just something that just wasn't me. I had friends that were real interested but I wasn't, but when I came back my second semester and as the process began to take place where various organizations would solicit and talk to you about it, the Lord made a very important impression upon my life. I felt very clearly that the Lord was calling me to the "Greek system as a missionary." Now, those of you that have been a part of the Greek system, you understand exactly what I mean. It's called being a light in a very dark environment.

So I went through the system and I received a bid and I began what we call the pledge-ship process. After our first week of pledge-ship, they kept us up all week, we hadn't slept at all. We had a retreat where they allowed us with our big brother to communicate some information to the group as a whole. We had to fill out this questionnaire with all kinds of information about our background and such, and you're maybe wondering, "Well, why would you have to do that with a group you're pledging?" Well, when you got 80-100 guys there, a lot of them didn't get to know you very well, or maybe I've seen him but I don't really know him, and they wanted to know everything about us.

Well, one of the questions was: why did you decide to pledge this fraternity? Now I had an opportunity/choice to make, do I tell them the truth or do I just allow it to skirt? So I

told the truth. Here's what I wrote on the piece of paper, here's what my big brother communicated, and here's what I affirmed that day. It said on that questionnaire something that went a little something like this: I grew up in a Christian home, I grew up primarily with Christian friends, but the Lord has called me to Christian ministry. I don't know a whole lot of lost people and y'all are the nicest lost people I've found. True story. That day I was selected for the next 3 ½ years to be the official designated driver of that organization. So on various and sundry adventures and such, I was the voice and the presence of sobriety in the midst of a whole lot of not so sober environment.

In Acts 7, a man by the name of Stephen stands up to a crowd that probably would have had several dozen, maybe hundreds of people with rocks in their hand and he doesn't cave and he doesn't give in. You know, my semester of pledging, we had an individual that was in my pledge class, he was a wonderful guy, kind of a calm spirit, so to speak, but I'm going to tell you what: every time the alcohol started to flow in his life, he wanted to go over to the house and fight the biggest senior that we had in our fraternity. Do you know what I did a lot of nights when I was pledging? I wrestled him in the front yard of the house saying, "You cannot go in there. You're going to get us both kicked out." Why? Because he thought he was bulletproof. "I can take him." You know the old phrase in the South, right, "Hey guys, watch this." Can we just say it for what we hear in this context, "Hey guys, hold my beer." In other words, "I'm about to do something really stupid that I wouldn't normally do if I wasn't drinking this." Liquid courage, right?

But think about this in terms of Ephesians 5. What part of the flesh says, "Yeah, I'm going to stand up in the face of opposition when everybody in my organization, everybody in my family, everybody in my company denounces the things of Jesus, I will stand up just like Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego did in the book of Daniel, or just like Stephen did here in Acts 7." When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, it doesn't matter if we're outnumbered. It doesn't matter if they have more resources because being filled with the Holy Spirit gives us the power and the ability to do and be and to stand up for the life that he's called us to be.

Fast forward to Acts 9. We find whom we know as the Apostle Paul, most readily known for his conversion on the road to Damascus which takes place in this chapter. His conversion takes place. He sees the light. He's blinded by the light and three days later, verse 17 takes place, "And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as you came, hath sent me, that thou might receive you sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit." This same Apostle Paul is filled with the Holy Spirit, the scales come off his eyes. Did you know that when you're filled with the Holy Spirit, you see God move in ways and places that others don't see him move?

I mentioned to you that for 3 ½ years I was the designated driver. That's what I did. Not every weekend but it felt like it, as I transported individuals to and from this gathering back to the dorm, back to an apartment, whatever it may be, and can I share with you one thing that I saw a whole lot of when I saw inebriated people? It was amazing that we would be the only two in the vehicle and yet they were having a conversation with four

other people. They saw people I didn't see. You do know there's a reason that they call alcohol spirits? They were having conversations with people that weren't even in the vehicle. We would be in a room trying to sober somebody up and they'd be having a conversation with a whole bunch of folks that were not there.

"Be not drunk with wine, which is excess, but be filled with the Holy Spirit." Just like intoxication sometimes allows for people to see things that aren't really there physically, when the Holy Spirit fills us, when we are yielded to his movement in our lives, we can see the hand of the Lord move when nobody else does. We can see the miraculous occur when nobody else does. We can see him operating in our lives even if no one else around us can see it.

So when we talk about being filled with the Holy Spirit, we notice that the words will change, our demeanor will change, our brazenness or our boldness will change, and yes, even what we see will change. But last but not least, Acts 11, we meet a guy by the name of Barnabas and the reason Acts 11 is where we close today is that we see something happen beyond just an individual whose individual life was changed. We see something more than just a man who was "for the other team" who is now a part of ours. We see something more than just those that were scared who are now speaking up.

Acts 11, beginning in verse 19, is the story of Barnabas. I want you to see what happens in verse 24. "For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." There was a scene that took place here different than all the other ones. Here when Barnabas was filled with the Holy Spirit, here in Antioch, the whole town came out. It revolutionized, in our vernacular, it revolutionized a company, it revolutionized an organization, it revolutionized a team, it revolutionized a community, or in the context of history when revival comes, it revolutionizes an entire country and/or continent.

I mentioned to you my job as being the designated driver for some years. Even though my organization did not have anybody from a Latino background, our most famous event of the year was the Cinco de Mayo party. Go figure. Every year it was their ambition to start at 6 a.m. on Saturday and still be "standing" at 6 a.m. Sunday. So my job as a designated driver began about 11 in the morning or noon on Saturday and it was nonstop for the next 18 hours as I was taking people and sobering them up and doing everything I could to help them in some way or fashion. That day dragged on long in my life.

A little bit after midnight, though, one night, I come back with the Jeep. I had borrowed a Jeep from a friend of mine because the reason I borrowed his Jeep is you could take the drain plugs out of the bottom and you didn't worry. Never mind, I won't go into detail there. But I came back to the house and I was there on the front lawn with the Jeep and everybody at the party was standing there and they had all sobered up real quick. Something had happened and it wasn't good. I got out and I said, "Guys, what's

happened?" They said, "Man, we need your help." I said, "What has gone on?" They said, "You are not going to believe it." Here's what had occurred. It just so happened that one of the residents of that house in our organization was the mascot for the university that I attended. You know, the guy on the sidelines with the big animal outfit, the big head, the whole bit. Somebody had strolled up into his room completely drunk out of their mind, we didn't even know the person, had put on the mascot costume, had run on the campus and passed out in front of the student union. When I showed up, everybody was there. Word gets out amazingly at events like that. Can I tell you how grateful I am that we did not have smartphones, YouTube and text messaging back then? Because everybody was there. It created a scene. It created a buzz. Everybody, trust me, everybody was talking about it.

Guess what? When Barnabas goes to Antioch and he starts living for Jesus, it says he's filled with the Holy Spirit, they're so talking about it, do you know what they decided? We're going to change your name. We're going to call you Christians because you act so much like Jesus you're changing everything your life comes into contact with. You change everything. You're changing the company you work for. You're changing the home you live in. You're changing the city that you reside in. What we discover about the filling of the Holy Spirit is it is more than just one life change and one alteration of behavior or words, but it can create a scene that changes an entire environment: home, work, team, school or otherwise.

"Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Holy Spirit." When we as believers of Jesus Christ begin to yield ourselves to the power of the Holy Spirit, it can change everything: the words that come out of our mouth; the actions that our bodies take place in; and even change the environment we find ourselves in.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. I know today we've spent a lot of time dealing with the movement of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life, but maybe you're here today and you're not a believer. Maybe you came questioning. Maybe you came doubting. But maybe today the Holy Spirit moved and operated in your life as we read these words and we shared these stories, and maybe you realized today that that is desperately what you've been searching for and seeking and that you want and need in your life. I've got some great news for you. It's not about signing up for a bunch of classes. It's not about jumping through a bunch of hoops. The Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Maybe you're that person today whether on our campus or on the other side of the camera, allow me just to encourage you, just have a conversation with the Lord. You don't have to have this conversation out loud. In fact, you don't even have to say the same words that I would say but maybe your conversation would go a little something like this. "Lord, today I just want to confess, I just want to admit what you already know, I'm the problem. God, I'm the problem but I believe that Jesus is the answer. I believe that Jesus loved me so much that he was willing to be born on my behalf. I believe that Jesus loved me so much that he was willing to live a sinless life on my behalf. I believe that Jesus loved me so much that he was willing to pay the price of my sin on Calvary and he was willing to shed his blood as the payment for my sins. I believe that three days later he rose from the grave victorious so that I would have

the opportunity to be forgiven and I could be saved. And God, today I don't have all the answers to all the problems of life, but I do know that Jesus is the answer to my sin problem so in the best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me. I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, if that's the conversation you had with the Lord this morning or maybe you've got questions about having that conversation with the Lord, we'd love to have a talk with you just to converse with you during this time. We'd love the privilege of talking it out or praying through whatever you're struggling with or whatever decision you feel you need to make. But maybe you're here today and the presence of the Holy Spirit has been in your life for years, maybe some of you decades, but the power of the Holy Spirit has been pretty dim. Maybe today it's not about having a conversation with me or somebody else, maybe today is about walking out of this place yielded to the Holy Spirit, more desirous to be intoxicated with the movement of the Lord than with the movement of the world.

Lord, as we come to this time, thank you for second chances. Thank you, God, that when we woke up this morning, a life that was all out of kilter and a wreck, and even though we've done our best to cover it up, you did not disown us, you did not abandon us, but much the opposite, you have reached out your hand of mercy, your hand of grace, and your desire more than anything is for us to be in your perfect will and walking in your perfect way. God, whatever that looks like today, whatever decision needs to be made, whatever conversation needs to be had, help us to just simply follow your lead. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.