



John 16.4b-15

Bent and broken no longer, I am cleansed. Shame has no place in my life for I am forgiven. Condemnation. Guilt. Fear. All banished through the gracious work of God in the person of Jesus. God loved me, loved you, loved the world enough to push past our defenses, our self-righteous claims of sufficiency, our futile attempts at godhood to bring us rescue. It boggles my mind to think what God has done. I simply cannot wrap my mind around what kind of God would do what He has done. It is breathtaking to consider.

There is just one problem. Me. Ok. Maybe the better way to say it is my life or my experience. Here's the honest truth; I may be forgiven. I may have a new standing with God. God's love may have pursued me but I still seem unable to live rightly with this loving God. I seem to be permanently bent, destined on my own to drift back to my delusions of self-righteous sufficiency and godhood. It seems that I need something more, something more than forgiveness. I need something that orients and empowers me to live rightly with the God who has forgiven me, because honestly, on my own I just can't.

Maybe that is the problem, trying it on my own. Maybe I wasn't meant to do it on my own. Could it be my assumption that since Jesus has cleaned me up I need to go out and get it right is really all wrong? Jesus seems to say it is. He states very plainly that the only way I am ever going to be able to live rightly with the God who has forgiven me is through an intimate connection with Jesus (John 15.5). Somehow in this relationship, I find the orientation and empowering I need. Allright. That makes sense. But how do I have a relationship with Jesus, the very Jesus who doesn't physically walk the earth right now? How do I turn to him to let him orient and empower me? Jesus seems to say that is the role of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit, or better yet the "Advocate" is the one who comes up alongside me. He is the one who is always with me, always speaking, always empowering. He is the one I need, the one through whom I relate to Jesus, the only one through whom I am able to live rightly. In opening up my life to the Spirit, I find myself able to do what I could not do on my own. My life begins to change. I begin to experience life as it was meant to be. I find myself on a journey back to Eden. That leaves me asking one final question. What about the rest of the world? I may be changing, but the world, it doesn't seem to be at all. So what happens to the world? Good thing we have one more chapter left in *The Story*.

A fellow traveler,

Blake
Spiritual Formation Pastor

My Next Step

We encourage you to consider doing the following as a way of handing off faith to your family. . .

- **Illustrate how the Spirit works:** The concept of the Holy Spirit can be difficult for children to understand. It is difficult enough for adults to understand. After the sermon, your children may have questions about who the Spirit is and how He works. You might consider explaining that the Spirit is actually God who comes to live inside us for the purpose of helping us live as God meant for us to live. You can use a balloon to illustrate your point. A balloon on its own has no life or shape to it. However, when we blow up the balloon, filling it with air, it takes on shape and life. We can't see the air inside the balloon but we can see what it does to the balloon. The Spirit works in much the same way. Apart from the Spirit, we have little that gives us true shape and life. However, the Spirit can come inside us. We can't see Him but we can see what He does in our lives. You might consider talking about how the Spirit is presently giving shape to your life.

We encourage you to take one of the following next steps on your faith journey. . .

- **Making room for the Spirit:** The Holy Spirit is the one who orients and empowers us in our daily lives to live rightly with the God who has forgiven us. However, the Spirit only works insofar as we allow Him to work. It is quite possible to stifle the Spirit and allow ourselves to be controlled by other factors in life (1 Thess. 5.19; Eph. 5.18-20). This week consider how you might make room for the Holy Spirit to speak to you and guide you. One action you might consider is setting the alarm on your cell phone to go off at key moments in the day. Perhaps this is when you go to work, right before important meetings, and before you head home for the day. As the alarm goes off, offer this simple prayer to God. "Lord Jesus, I am open to your Spirit's leading at this point in my day." Move forward in this state of openness, allowing God to move in and through you.