

[I'll find a family photo] A couple of years ago, my siblings and I all got together with my mom and stepdad for a little family reunion. I love my siblings - when we were younger, we fought like cats and dogs, but today we're close and I genuinely enjoy spending time with them and their spouses and kids. The weekend was really fun... until the last night. I am not sure what happened, but suddenly we were all fighting again - just like when we were kids. It was a strange experience, but I bet a lot of you know exactly what I'm talking about.

[revertigo graphic] *How I Met Your Mother* called this *revertigo* - when you hang out with people from your past, people who formed you, and you end up reverting to those past behaviors.

It's maddening - sometimes embarrassing, sometimes genuinely frustrating. But it's because *we're formed by our past*. Our family, our culture, our education, all of these form us at a deep level. So deep that those behaviors and thoughts emerge at inconvenient times.

Fighting with siblings isn't the end of the world, but it's not the *greatest* feeling to realize some of those childish behaviors and attitudes you thought you'd left behind long ago are still lurking somewhere in your psyche, just waiting for the right trigger to reemerge.

[Faith revertigo] That's a big frustration for faith, too. We talk a lot here about the new life God invites us into, about finding your calling, about Catalyst as a new thing God is doing in the world. And it's frustrating when you're going along, making connections with people at the Church, finding the life God has promised and then BOOM you hit a trigger and that old self pops back up. A habit you haven't kicked. A temper you thought was under control. An old insecurity. A scar from a past hurt. The revertigo kicks in and you feel like you haven't made any progress at all. Like all that new life and transformation talk just isn't for you. Maybe you're missing some essential component.

Friends, if you feel that way, you're not alone. This is, in fact, one of the commonest experiences in faith. So take comfort in the fact that everyone else in this room knows exactly what you're going through. And take comfort in this: though we experience these moments of revertigo in our faith, they are not the rule of the day. In fact, we can take comfort in the promise that our transformation is not based on our ability to be different. Rather, even in moments of revertigo - especially in moments of revertigo, we can trust that the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is at work to transform us, to make us new, to give us life.

The right response to revertigo is *not* to give up, but to get back up. The good response to these times of failure is not to throw in the towel, but to press on. We need not believe the lie that we're doomed to slide backward into old, sinful and destructive patterns of behavior. We can trust that the Spirit is even now making all things new and that includes you and me.

[System Failure Graphic] All the way back in February, we began looking at broken systems in our culture, systems that form us away from God. We spent six weeks investigating some foundational structures in our world that shape us from the moment we're born - everything from what we eat to how we're educated to what makes us afraid to the privilege we're born with.

On Good Friday, we watched as Jesus bore the weight of our sinful systems on the Cross. And on Easter Sunday, we celebrated what his resurrection meant: that God has set us free to live in the new world Jesus' resurrection has inaugurated. God frees us from the broken world we were born into and makes us new, invites us into a redeemed and restored life.

[Identity Crisis Graphic] For the last two months, we've been asking what that new life looks like, and we've seen that when God gives us new life, God does so by bringing us into the Church, the very body of Jesus. The Church is the counter-institution, the site of healing and hope for the world, the place where we are formed as God's children, the place where we learn to resist the broken systems of the world. We called this series Identity Crisis because being God's image in the world, the Church, is difficult. To live as God's people, the people of the slaughtered Lamb, is harder than living in the comfort of our sinful culture. It's hard, in other words, to be square pegs in a world of round holes.

[Scripture Slide 1] This has been true for Jesus' followers since the beginning. So if you have a Bible, turn with me to John 14. These are some of Jesus' final words to his followers before he was arrested and executed. Scholars treat this as his farewell address, and in this particular passage, he's dealing with the reality that he is going to be gone soon. The disciples will be left without their leader, their rabbi. How can they possibly press on without Jesus there to lead them?

It's worth noting we're in exactly the same boat as the disciples were soon to be. Jesus is not bodily with us. He's not our pastor. He's not teaching us. We can't call him for advice. So the promise Jesus makes here to his followers is a promise we desperately need - especially if like me your faith isn't perfect.

Let's read together, beginning in verse 8:

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

Jesus replied, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don't know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you? Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me. Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do.

"I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!

"If you love me, obey my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world

cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.

Jesus first reminds the disciples that if they have seen him, they have seen the Father. Jesus and the Father are one and the same. He then promises them that just because he's leaving doesn't mean they're done. Quite the opposite - they're going to accomplish more than Jesus himself did. An amazing claim, and probably the moment our revertigo kicks in. We have trouble imagining even *keeping up* with Jesus, let alone surpassing his work in the world. But then Jesus explains: we're not going to be alone. The Father is sending us an Advocate, the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will live within us. Now skip down to verse 25:

"...I am telling you these things now while I am still with you. But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.

"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid. -- John 14:8-17, 25-27

The Spirit will teach us everything. The Spirit will lead us into Truth. The Spirit is Jesus' gift of peace in a world that makes empty promises of the same again and again. The Spirit makes us into the Church.

The Spirit is the difference between a room full of cowards and an unstoppable movement.

[Can we bring back visual cues from the previous sermons?] The Spirit sets us free from the broken systems of our world. The Spirit frees us to find healing among the people of God.

The Spirit enables us to be vulnerable in the world, to invite the world to find God in the very wounds of Jesus' crucifixion.

The Spirit enables us to live as slaughtered lambs in a world of lions.

The Spirit teaches us to hear the voice of the Lamb who is our shepherd amidst the chaos of our busy lives.

The Spirit gives us the courage to love God, to love each other and to love ourselves.

The Spirit is the fountain of living water bringing healing among us as we seek God together.

The Spirit makes us one without making us all the same. The Spirit teaches us to love well.

Friends, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, breathes life into us and transforms us. The Holy Spirit, the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, makes us new. [Scripture Slide 2] Paul celebrates this in the book of Romans - turn to Romans 8 with me. The bulk of this letter

so far has found Paul explaining the full consequences of Sin for all humanity. In chapters 5-7, he's been reflecting on the utter hopelessness of humanity's plight if left to our own devices. He ended chapter 7 with a cry of defeat: "Wretched person that I am, who can save me from this body of death?"

Chapter 8 begins Paul's powerful answer by celebrating Jesus, crucified and raised. And basically all of chapter 8 is a celebration of the new life the Spirit makes available to us. It's worth reading the whole chapter this week, maybe a couple of times. But I want to hone in on a few verses in the middle that get at the new relational status the Spirit gives us. Read with me, beginning in verse 14:

All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering. -- Romans 8:14-17

Friends, when we step into a life of faith, the Holy Spirit indwells our lives. We become knit into the body of Christ, the Church, the embassy of God's new creation here in the world. But more than that, we are drawn into the interior life of God, called into the midst of the eternal love that is the heartbeat of the Holy Trinity. We become children of God, imitators of Jesus himself.

Which is why Paul includes that bit there at the end - if we are to share in Christ's glory - the resurrection, the new creation, that Holy City of the Revelation we've been exploring for the last few weeks, then we must follow Jesus' way in this world. That means, like Christ, we will suffer.

It is not easy to live as outsiders in a world of us and them. It is not easy to choose love in a world of violence. It is not easy to choose forgiveness in a world of vengeance. It is not easy to be a people of the slaughtered lamb in a world of lions.

Friends this is why we must be attuned to the Spirit's work in our lives. Without the Spirit making us new, we are hopeless to achieve real transformation. We might fake it for a while, but in the end, we'll remain children of this world, bent away from God.

I doubt I'm telling you anything you don't already know. We all know the feeling of failure when we're trying to change. The defeat when revertigo kicks in and it feels like we're back at square one. But living in the Spirit is not rocket science. It's really not. We want some magic bullet, some secret formula to success.

[Image] It's as simple as choosing to *be* church together. The spiritual grandfather of our denomination is John Wesley - our theological perspective is called Wesleyan after him. Wesley believed God is love, that God wants a relationship with us, that God seeks us out. Wesley grew

up in the early years of the 18th century in England, and he was frustrated with the spiritual stagnation he witnessed around him. He didn't see the power of the Spirit anywhere.

So in 1729, when Wesley got to college he did something really crazy - some might even say radical. He and his brother Charles started meeting with some other friends once a week. At these meetings they prayed together and asked each other how they were progressing in their faith.

Crazy, huh?

They called this their "Holy Club", and they all found as they met together and encouraged each other in their faith, the Spirit began to work powerfully in their lives. Revival broke out at Oxford, and spread all over England. Because people met together and shared their lives - their triumphs and struggles.

Holy Clubs... really a fancy title for friendships. My best friend Tom loves basketball. And like a lot of us, he gets a little competitive on the court. I remember one time he called me, upset. He had been playing a pickup game at his local rec center when he and another guy got into it on the court. The guy had been antagonizing Tom for most of the game, and the altercation came to a head when Tom threw the ball at/to the other guy and left. He called me because he was having revertigo. Tom had been actively praying over his temper on the court - he wanted to learn to play intense without flying off the handle about things. He felt in that moment a sense of defeat because he felt the way he had reacted looked a lot more like the Old Tom than the person he was becoming.

I was frankly surprised. The outburst he described to me was relatively minor for a game of basketball, and for the kinds of blowups he had had in the past. I told him as much, and pointed out multiple examples of how I had seen growth in his life. I challenged him not to be so hard on himself, to give the growth evident in his life fair due. Tom left our conversation encouraged, and able to give himself some grace, to celebrate that though he had gotten mad, he didn't express his anger sinfully as he would have even a few months earlier.

We couldn't have had that conversation if Tom had not been honest with me. If I didn't know his struggles with his anger, I couldn't have known to point out the ways I had seen him grow. Without the shared life between us, Tom and I both would have been blind to how the Spirit was transforming him.

This is why the heart of Catalyst is our C-Groups and Life Transformation Groups. In these smaller settings, you can meet with others on the same journey of faith as you. You can share you life with them, and receive from them as they share. You participate in the life of the Spirit together.

Friends, as we journey into God's new world, as the Spirit makes all things new, including you and me, we will stumble. We will have those moments of revertigo, when it feels as though we

haven't made any progress. Those are the very moments we need the Church to be the Church, when we need our community surrounding us, helping us to see how the Spirit is transforming us.

God has not abandoned us to our own devices. God has not left becoming new up to us. God has come to us in the person of the Spirit. God lives in and among us in the person of the Spirit. God binds us together as a people in the person of the Spirit. God transforms us in the person of the Spirit.

Catalyst is a force for life and hope and love in our community. As we continue to gather to worship, to share life together, to serve our community together, the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead is making us more loving. More joyful. More peaceful and patient and kind. More generous. More faithful and gentle. More self-controlled, even on the basketball court.

Communion SetUp

[Communion Slide]