

God The Holy Spirit Has Unlimited Power For You A Bible Study On John 7:37-39

2nd Step Lesson 1

Ever hear of “white knuckle sobriety?” That’s what happens when an addict approaches his recovery thinking, “I’m so scared my sobriety might just slip away from me, any second now something might come along and trigger a relapse, I just *gotta* hold onto my sobriety, I just *gotta* fight my cravings.” Sort of like driving a car on an icy road: you grip the steering wheel so tightly your knuckles turn white. As you can imagine, “white knuckle sobriety” doesn’t last too long: the person either finds a way to recover that doesn’t involve so much fear and pressure, or else he relapses.

A lot of people look at their relationship with Jesus that same way. They’re afraid that their faith is so fragile that it might disappear any time. They think that it’s up to them to keep their connection with God alive. And, just like the person with “white knuckle sobriety,” they often burn out after a while and quit reading the Bible and getting together with other believers, and even quit praying. The burden of responsibility for keeping their faith alive is too much to bear.

If you’ve been approaching your life with God with some of that kind of fear and pressure, the Bible has good news: God the Holy Spirit is the one who started your new life with God, and “he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” [Philippians 1:6]. God the Holy Spirit has unlimited power to keep your new life alive and growing and overflowing.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

- What happens to you when you’re under the kind of pressure that says, “It’s all up to you?” Does your performance get better? Does it last? Do you collapse?
- What does it take to “recharge your batteries?” How long before you need to be “recharged” again?

John 7:37-39

37 On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." 39 By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In verse 37 Jesus holds out a promise to anyone who is “thirsty,” that he will let them have something to “drink”--in other words, Jesus promises to meet the deepest needs of

anyone who comes to him and listens to his Word. Some of the ways Jesus meets those needs are:

- Providing forgiveness for all your guilt, through his dying in your place on the cross
- Promising to stay with you, no matter what
- Giving you a home in heaven
- Promising to listen and answer whenever you pray

Are there other ways you can think of that Jesus can meet your deepest needs?

2. The Bible makes it clear that “the Spirit” who comes to us through hearing God’s Word is not just a force or an influence from God. For instance:

- John 6:63 - The Holy Spirit **gives life** to those who listen to Jesus’ Word
- Romans 8:26 -The Holy Spirit **pleads** for us to the Father
- Ephesians 4:30 - The Holy Spirit **grieves** when believers act lovelessly
- I Corinthians 2:10 - The Holy Spirit **searches** everyone’s mind
- I Corinthians 12:11 - The Holy Spirit **decides** which particular gifts he’ll give to individual believers

And put all this together with what the apostle Peter told two church members who thought they could get away with a selfish lie:

“How is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit?... What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God” [Acts 5:3-4]

How might this change your attitude toward life, to know that **God himself** has come to live in you and be the power in your new life as a believer?

3. Jesus calls the Holy Spirit in believers “living water” in verse 38. “Living water” means running water, like a river or a spring-fed stream, as opposed to a pool or a tank of standing water. How might this change your attitude toward life, to know that the Holy Spirit’s power for your new life as a believer is *unlimited*?

What changes would you expect to start seeing in your life, with the Holy Spirit putting his unlimited power to work in you?

4. In verse 38 Jesus says that “streams of living water will flow from within” the person who listens to Jesus’ Word and believes it. In other words, the Holy Spirit’s power won’t just stay in you, it will flow out from you to other people who need it. How do you think the Holy Spirit might work through you to help other people?

CLOSING PRAYER: What would you like to ask God to put his power to work on in you?

Am I Confusing God With The Higher Powers I Used To Have?

2nd Step – Lesson 2

Before God started us down the road of recovery, we were turning our will and our lives over to people and things that were destroying us. Now God has showed us his love and acceptance through his Son Jesus, and we're starting to "turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him."

But is our understanding of God mixed up with our understanding of the "higher powers" we used to turn our will and our lives over to? GOD IS NOT A DRUG! Don't expect him to act like one!

For instance:

- Unlike drugs, God doesn't exist to perform miracles at your convenience.
Mark 1:41-45—Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.
- Unlike drugs, God wants you as his friend, not his slave.
John 15:13-15—Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.
- Unlike drugs, God wants to help you be your real self, not a clone of other addicts.
Isaiah 43:1—But now, this is what the LORD says—he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.
- Unlike drugs, God doesn't abandon you when you don't pay up.
Matthew 28:20—"I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
- Are there other ways God has surprised you by treating you differently than your drug treated you?
- Are there ways you still expect God to treat you the way your drug treated you?

“...Came To Believe That A Power Greater Than Ourselves Could Restore Us To Sanity”

2nd Step - Lesson 3

Romans 1:28-32 – Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them. *[I'm insane if I know right from wrong but I don't care.]*

Romans 8:7 – The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. *[I'm insane when I go against God, and I can't even imagine living any other way.]*

Luke 15: 17 – "When he came to his senses, he said, `How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!'" *[I'm starting to get sane when I look at my messed up life and think, "What's wrong with this picture?"]*

Romans 7:19-20 – For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. *[I'm beginning to get sane when I look at my insane behavior and want it to stop.]*

Mark 8:35 – When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind. *[I'm sane when I listen to God's voice of love and not to all the forces that try to destroy me.]*

Titus 2:11-12 – For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age... *[I'm sane when I'm living in God's grace and learning to think and act God's way.]*

Mark 3:20-21 – Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind." *[I can't necessarily go by what other people think is sane or insane. Jesus' own family thought he was crazy for a while.]*

What are some other ways you would describe your insanity?

What are some other ways you would describe your sanity?

Jesus Is The Power For Your New Life A Bible Study On John 15:1-8

2nd Step - Lesson 4

"I want to live God's way. I want to leave this life of doing dope and doing wrong behind. I've been praying for God to keep me strong, and I've been trying my hardest for years to make it happen, but I don't ever seem to change. Every time I relapse I figure, Well, this time I just have to try even harder to live right. But I just can't seem to make it work."

It's frustrating and discouraging to keep trying and failing to change the way you live. Especially when you reach deep inside yourself for the strength and the will to change, and you come up short, it's easy to start thinking that there's no hope.

God has never said in his Word that it's up to you and me to somehow come up with the strength to change our lives. God doesn't just give us the commands; he gives us the will and the ability to carry them out. And he does that by giving us *himself*.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

- What are some ways that you (and other people you know) have tried to change your behavior (for instance: shaming yourself, scaring yourself, trying to use common sense, etc.)?
- Have you ever turned the control of something over to someone who was better at the job than you were? What does it feel like to work under a capable person, rather than trying to do a job yourself that you're not good at?

John 15:1-8

1 [Jesus said:] "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What happens to a living branch that gets broken off from the rest of the tree? What happens when a living branch stays firmly attached to a healthy tree?

What promises do you see Jesus making to you here, when he says, “I am the vine, you are the branches?”

2. In verses 1-2 Jesus talks about pruning the branches, cutting off the dead or diseased parts. How have you experienced God pruning things away from you that don't belong?

3. Look at Jesus' promise in verse 3. Here are some of the words of Jesus to you that make you clean:

- “Friend, your sins are forgiven” [Luke 5:20].
- “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned” [John 3:16-18].
- “My blood of the covenant is poured out for the many, for the forgiveness of sins” [Matthew 26:28].

Are there some other words of Jesus you can think of that let you know you are clean in God's sight?

4. In verses 4-5 Jesus is saying that he not only gives you his Word to be your strength, he gives you *himself*. How do you see Jesus describing his connection with you in these verses?

So what is your real source of power for living a new life? How do you think life might be different, relying on that power source?

5. Verse 6 talks about what happens to a branch that is cut off from the rest of the plant. What have you seen happen when you cut yourself off from your relationship to Jesus and try to use some other source of power to live your life?

6. In verse 7 Jesus is making a surprising promise. Think about what he means when he says, “Ask for whatever *you wish*.” As you grow in your relationship to Jesus, and Jesus replaces your sinfulness with his holiness, your desires change and become the same as God's desires. Have you seen your mind and heart changing with Jesus living in you?

7. If living the Christian life were just a matter of you trying your best, God wouldn't receive much glory from your life. What does verse 8 have to say about what happens when Jesus lives in you as the power for your Christian life?

CLOSING PRAYER: What “fruit” would you like to see Jesus producing in you

We Have Real Power Over Our Dependencies

2nd Step – Lesson 5

“Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a Power by which we could live, and it had to be a Power greater than ourselves.” (AA, pg. 45)

“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.” (Second Step)

“I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.” (Ephesians 1:18-21)

By ourselves, on our own, we are powerless to resist our impulses and our cravings. After a while we more or less got used to living that way. We couldn't even imagine living another way.

But when the God of grace, who loved us enough to let his Son's blood eliminate our guilt and make us fit for heaven, got a hold of us, a new power came into our lives and hearts. The power that made the dead body of Jesus alive again is now in us, too.

“Lack of power” is no longer our dilemma. Now our dilemma is *believing* the truth about our new power, and *living* in that truth.

Fill in the blank with stuff that you've been powerless over:

“Because of the power of almighty God, who now lives in me, I don't have to _____ any more.”

What are some things that are helping you to live in that truth?

There's Only One Higher Power Worthy Of That Title

2nd Step – Lesson 6

1 Kings 8:23 – "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below--you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way."

Step 2 – "Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

We have had other "higher powers" in our lives besides God. We've had things we...

- Depended on the way we needed to depend on God ("If I hit the lottery, then I'll be set for life and I'll be happy")
 - Committed ourselves to the way we needed to commit ourselves to God ("I'll do anything for you, baby, just don't leave me")
 - Respected and feared the way we needed to respect and fear God ("If people don't like me I'll be totally lost; I have to get everybody to keep liking me")
 - Let be in charge of our lives the way we needed to let God be in charge of our lives ("A couple more drinks and I'll be feeling no pain")
- How else have we turned things into higher powers?
 - How have those higher powers made us crazy (rather than "restoring us to sanity")?

God is different from all those other higher powers. He...

- Loves us when it doesn't seem like anybody else loves us, including ourselves
 - Treats us with respect when we're not getting respected by anyone else, including ourselves
 - Is dependable, when everybody else lets us down, including ourselves
- In what other ways is God different from all those other higher powers?
 - How does having the God of grace as your higher power "restore you to sanity"?

Your Master's Dead! Quit Taking Orders From Him!

2nd Step - Lesson 7

What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?... Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman. [from Galatians, chapter 4]

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. [Romans 7:14-17]

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. [Galatians 5:24-25]

Step 2: "We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

You were born into slavery, and you were conditioned from the start to do whatever your master said without question. But the master's now dead. Jesus rose from the dead, kicked down the master's door, and handed his gun to you and told you, "You can do the honors." The master's dead, and you're not a slave to him any more.

But your slave conditioning runs deep! You find yourself doing some things without question simply because that's what the master had told you to do. You do it because you think you have no choice. You're free, but you still find yourself living like a slave, and doing what the master wanted you to do!

- What are some harmful things you find yourself doing because you think you have to do them?

- What happens when you realize, “I don’t have to do this any more! The master who ordered me to do this is dead!”?

You're Safe With The God Of Grace

2nd Step - Lesson 8

We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

A lot of people grow up without knowing what it's like to feel loved and safe. Home, for these people, was a place where you had to always be on your guard, ready to dive for cover whenever Mom or Dad would lose her or his temper and choose to focus the rage on one of the kids. Listen to one man's story:

"I remember one time - I must have been six or seven - when I got up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom. When I was done and I opened the door, my father was there waiting for me. And what he did was smack me across the face - because I woke him up by flushing the toilet."

People who grew up in a home like this have a hard time feeling loved and safe anywhere and with anyone.

The God who reveals himself in the Bible has good news for anyone struggling with this kind of situation: "You're safe with me."

- How do you know when you're **not** in a safe place or with safe people? How do you act when you're not safe?
- How do you know when you **are** in a safe place and with safe people? How do you act when you are safe?

Isaiah 43:1-3

1 But now, this is what the LORD says - he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. 3 For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

1. If a person got used to getting humiliated and hurt when parents or other adults turned their attention on him, what do you think this person might expect to happen when **God** turns his attention on him?

What are the first two words God has to say to his people in verse 1? How do you feel when you hear your Creator telling you that?

2. In verse 1 God says, "I have redeemed you." "Redeem" means "pay a price to get something back." What do you know about the price Jesus paid to get us back when we'd left him? What does that tell you about how God looks at you?

3. God's next words in verse 1 are, "I have summoned you by name; you are mine." What does that tell you about how safe you are with God?

4. Look at verses 2-3. God doesn't promise to keep all troubles away from his people. What does he promise?

5. People who have felt unsafe are often scared to leave a place where they feel safe (church, hospital, drug rehab facility), and go back out into "the real world." What do verses 2-3 tell you about being truly safe, no matter where you are or what dangers you're facing?

6. How do you think it might change the way you think and act, to be sure of being safe and loved by God?