

## CCC STOPPING TO REFUEL Part 6

### When You're Running on Empty

We are continuing this series we're calling "Running on Empty." And today we're going to be talking about refueling, "Stopping to Refuel." In today's times of high gas prices when you talk about refueling... people start getting all uptight because just the word fuel has a negative twist to it. We all have seen \$3.00 and \$4.00 a gallon fuel prices. So when I say today's message is entitled, "Stopping to Refuel" I know it really doesn't convey a very positive message in today's culture. So what I've got to do is take this negative image of culture and try to help you understand that in the spiritual life this whole idea of refueling is essential to one's spiritual life. If you want to be vibrant in your relationship with God, if you want to

draw close to Him, if you want an intimacy that your heart longs for, if you want to experience that freedom and fullness that comes from being a follower of Jesus Christ, you've got to learn to be full of Him.

That's actually the prayer and the challenge the apostle Paul had for the church of Ephesus, and it's the same prayer that I have for you. Ephesians 3 "*That you would be filled with the fullness of life and the power that comes from God.*" I encourage you to circle "filled." The word "filled" in the Greek, which the original New Testament was written in, that word filled is a continuous verb. It means *being filled*. It's not a one-time filling. It's a being filled, a continuous verb. The word actually means to be filled, to be filled, to be filled, to be filled... It's a constant refueling. And why it is that we have to be filled, be filled, be filled, be filled is because we have a constant need.

What I know to be true about my life is this. If I'm not filled on a regular basis – and for me, *just me*, it's got to be a daily basis and if not, I feel different, I feel empty if I don't. And guess what: other people notice the difference in my life as well. Other people notice that I need refilling, They know when I'm running on empty because my emptiness will affect others as well as myself. I made a list, a self-evaluation of what happens in my life when I'm empty. Maybe you can identify with some of my list. When I'm running on empty, I'm selfish with my time. When I'm spiritually empty I'm selfish, I'm impatient specially when I am driving everybody's becomes an idiot and I'm the perfect driving poster child. When I'm empty my judgment is distorted. I don't make good decisions. When I'm empty I lack compassion for others who are hurting. When I'm empty I'm quickly enticed by

temptations. I feel more vulnerable. I begin to think that I deserve certain things when I'm empty. I'm short with people – particularly short people. When I'm spiritually empty I'm more cynical. I'm more critical in my thinking. My insecurities are more prevalent. I begin to look for others to fill up what only God can fill up. I know the look of spiritual emptiness in my life. I know what it looks like and it's not a pretty sight. It's actually ugly.

But what about you? Do you know what it looks like for you? Do you know what it looks like to be running on empty, on the other hand, do you know what it looks like to be full? Or maybe you have you been running your spiritual life on fumes for so long that you've forgotten the taste of what fullness is all about?

I want to ask you question, do you really want to be full or do you choose to just run on spiritual empty. Let me say it

this way. If I could show you today **how to not run on empty**, if I could show you how to live your life where you're always topped off would you be interested in that? See today, I want to take you today on a little journey through three specific scripture passages, before we get to the How, I want to build a case for the Why. If the Why doesn't make sense to you the How is going to have no power whatsoever. Let's go after the Why. Why do I need to be refueled on a daily basis?

**1. Something must change; emptiness is not working for me.**

This last week I heard from a lot of people and here is what they said to me, "Busyness is not working for me. Emptiness is not working for me." Something must change.

The passage in the Old Testament, in Jeremiah, "*This is what the Lord says: 'Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.'*" I hope you will read this passage. I hope you will meditate on this one and read it over and over and think about it. You ask where the good path is. Then you walk in it and you find rest for your soul. You're at a crossroads. I'm convinced that many people who go to Calvary church during this series you're at a crossroads of your life. You're seeking some kind of relief. There is a gnawing sense within your gut that you don't want to keep going at the pace you've been going. If truth be known you don't want to. Last week I told you that busyness has cost me. There is a price to busyness. It cripples relationships. Busyness fills our calendars but it fractures our families. Busyness props

up our image but it really shrinks our heart. Busyness feeds our ego but it starves our soul. Instead of running on empty take the advice from this scripture. Find the good way, you walk in it and then you get rest for your souls. That's what you're longing for. You're ready for a change. You're ready for something better.

Let's review from last week. I had you remember one sentence: busy isn't better, choosing better is better. Something's got to change.

**2. I need to refuel because I have a soul that wants to be filled.** It's likely that you don't give much thought to the fact that you have a soul. That may be too much of a generalization and some of you may get defensive. But, reality is we give a lot of thought to our bodies, to our minds. But we give very little thought to our souls.

Now please stay with me here for a minute: when our bodies are empty we know how to fill them up. We eat. When our minds are empty we can fill our minds up through study and reading or we can watch Oprah and she can tell us everything we need to know. But we're basically always filling our mind with something, good things or bad things or ugly things but were filling them.

But what do you do when your soul is empty? I may be wrong but I believe people don't give much consideration to their soul. Mostly because I think most people don't even know they have a soul.

What is a soul? The soul is the invisible part of you. The soul is the eternal part of you. It's the part of you that connects with God. Your soul is what makes you different from all of creation. It's the real you. Your soul is what defines you. That's why Jesus made such a big deal. He

wanted people to understand that your soul is more important than your stuff. Your soul is more important than your activity. Your soul is more important than your career. Your soul is the most important thing. You need to value your soul. Matthew 16 Jesus said, *“How do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your soul in the process? Is anything worth more than your soul?”*

Some of you here, you're so busy trying to gain the world or get your share of the world or create a little world of your own but in doing so you're losing your soul. And God's word, the bible is saying to us what benefit is it... None!

The image that comes to mind is the image of a scale. On one side of the scale you've got all your material possessions. All the things that you view as benefits to you. It's your car, your house, your portfolio, your job

title, your pool, your cabin, your boat Whatever it might be. It's the stuff you bought because you could. The other side of the scale is your soul.

In a rational mind you'd say, what weights more? Of course all the stuff that I have weighs more. But that's wrong. In God's divine measuring system, Jesus says your stuff loses to your soul. Your soul weighs more. It's the bigger deal. It's far and away your most valuable possession you have... Yet think about it. We go through life trying to fill our homes and our bodies and our calendars and our bank accounts and we give little or no attention to our soul. And our souls were designed to connect with God.

That's why if you're here and you wouldn't call yourself a follower of Jesus Christ, that's ok. Your welcome sit back and just enjoy the claims of Christ... but I would say

you're here because you're interested or at least seeking, there is a reason that you're seeking or interested. It's because you know in your soul that there is something more than just yourself, your stuff. There's something more to life than just this great big play ground we live in... There's something drawing you to a more spiritual place. A more soulful place

The key I want you to understand with this point right here is we are **not** physical beings that have a temporary spiritual experience. We're spiritual beings that have a temporary physical experience in this body. So I have a soul that is eternal that cries out to be filled.

**3. The third thing is my soul filling is an investment in eternity.** If I take the time to refuel my soul, I am making an investment in all of eternity. The Bible says this about our bodies (what I am about to say maybe a bit painful to

some and eye opening to others) – but our bodies are just containers. What I mean is you can have an organ transplant but it doesn't change your soul. You are still you. Your soul is what defines you. *“Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. Therefore we live by faith and not by sight.”* 2 Corinthians 5

When I connect with God, when I make that refueling connection I'm not only accessing power and guidance that I need for today but I'm also making an investment in eternity where my real and my final home is going to be. Think about the stuff that you're doing – the stuff that you're building, the stuff that you're gathering, the stuff that you're achieving. None of these things are going to last. But when you take time to fill your soul, when you take time to refuel and you take time to connect your soul

with God, you're making an investment in eternity and that's time well spent. That's the Why. That's why we've got to understand what I am saying here (mind) for it to move into here (our soul).

The How is where you're going to have to hang with me. How is this going to work in my life? How do I actually do this? How do I deepen my soul? How do I actually make God more integral of who I am? How do I make soul filling a habit?

Let's talk about you. I think everybody in here can do this and I think you can start it today. First thing you've got to do, everyday you've got to Stop. **You've got to stop your life.** This is the opposite of go and move and do. And when I say stop: Honestly, I don't care how long you do this for. I just want you to stop your life for a period of time during the day. It sounds easy but it's not. Here's the

point, for your soul to be nurtured, to be refilled daily, you've got to stop. You can't refuel on the run. As much as we'd like to have our cars just drive past a gas station and somehow be on full, it doesn't work that way. You can't refuel spiritually on the run and busy people struggle with stopping. But I'm asking you to stop. You stop your body. You stop your mind from the tasks and the To Do list. You just stop. This may take some practice for some of you. You're going to have to learn how to stop.

Here's the second thing you do. You stop and then you be quiet. To be refueled, quiet and silence for the soul is the equivalent of air and water is for the body. Silence is an important ingredient in the life of spiritual growth.

I wonder in my own life, how many times have I missed the voice of God because I was around noise so much, I was in busyness so much. I wonder how many times I

missed the voice of God because I was caught up in all the busyness and noise from the world. The challenge is stop and be quiet.

I like this saying I heard once, “Before we can listen, before we can truly hear the word of God addressed to our hearts, to our souls, the spirit and practice of silence is essential. Only one who has learned how to be silent, who has learned how to go beyond the noise from inside and outside himself will be able to hear the cry of others as well as the call of God.” WOW, I loved that. If you want to refuel, you’ve got to stop and be quiet. I’m not saying you’ve got to go to extremes. I’m not saying never use your phone. I’m not saying turn from all electricity and become an Amish monk. That’s not my point here. My point is you’ve just got to do something that’s different. So stop and be quiet.

The third thing I want to ask you to do is then make a connection. You stop, you be quiet, you make a connection. This is where you connect with God. If there’s any generation in the history of humanity that understands connection it’s our generation. We’re always connected. Some of you have been texting and answering emails even during this service. That’s how connected you are. With all the stuff that we’ve got – the blackberries the blueberries, the raspberries, I snowcones phones instant messaging and mobile phones, email. We’re always connected. Connection – what I’m asking you to do is for a little bit of time you stop and pause the outer connection so you can make an inner connection. This connection is essential to getting filled up. If you make this inner connection I guarantee you this: I promise you that your life is going to be different. Your life is going to be

unique. It's going to be one of a kind. It's going to be significant. It's going to be deeper and more soul nurturing. This connection can happen in many different ways. But when you make a connection, the connection begs for three questions: When, Where, What. If I'm going to make a connection with God here's what I've got to do.

I've got to come up with a *When*.

Simply put, *When* I am I going to stop? *When* am I going to be quiet? *When* am I going to make a connection that day? There are no rules for the *When*. When is it, morning, noon, maybe night, there are no rules for when? You settle on a *when* then stick to that when for a few weeks until it becomes a habit and if you do, I guarantee you will never be the same...

The second question is *Where*?

Where is it going to be? For me the only requirement for the *Where* is I've got to have a place that's quiet and away from my email, my cell phone and people. Because if I try to have it at my desk and my computer is right there, for me it doesn't work there. I've got to have a *Where*. For me it's just got to be quiet.

So When and Where. Then *What*?

What are you going to do? In the electronic world that we live in we use tools to connect with other people. Phones, PDA's that type of thing. Basically the *What* is, What tools do you use to connect? There are a lot of different tools that you can use. But basically I only know how to refuel my soul. I can't tell you how to refuel your soul. But you've got to find the *What*. We're all wired differently.

Notice I haven't said anything about time yet. How about two minutes. Two minutes to stop and be quiet and to make a connection with God. Good by me, because what will happen is as your soul gets nourished you will want to spend more time.

I think one of the tools might be prayer. One of the tools might be reading of God's word. For me, one of my favorite things to do, I have a little spiral bound notebook that I get at the grocery store. A little hundred page notebook. I put the date on the top when I start and when I finish. A lot of times I'll write out my prayers. When I read something in the Bible. A lot of the messages I give you come out of my own little Bible study that I write out in that little journal. I just save those journals.

Sometimes I write at the top of the page, "Yesterday I..." and I just make a list of everything I did yesterday because I want to say "God, yesterday, what were You trying to communicate to me?" And reflect on that. Sometimes my soul just needs quiet and I just need to reflect. Sometimes my soul needs encouragement. And I need to go to God's word. Sometimes my soul needs help in understanding God's word so I need to go to a book or a commentary to help me understand what I just read. My point is there's a lot of different things you can do with the *What?*

I don't want to leave you empty. I put a list together with some friends and a pastor friend of mine out in California. A list of twenty different ideas. On your notes at the bottom it says to access ideas to better help you with your own connection go to [Saddlebackfamily.com/quiet](http://Saddlebackfamily.com/quiet) time. Twenty different ideas. I listed on there at least ten

different books, ten different devotionals in addition to the twenty ideas.

If you don't have a computer and you can't download it, we have printed some up and you can get them at the information booth on your way out.

Also I encourage you to cut out the gas pump. I put this in my car as a reminder: That I need to be refueled today and need time for it

Let me ask you a question, can you see yourself doing that?

Does it seem possible? Does it seem practical? Do you see yourself being filled up? Can you imagine for just a minute if your soul was totally topped off? How maybe

your life might be different. Your pace might be different.

Your priorities might be different. The way you treat other people might be different. The way you feel about yourself

might be different. You wouldn't be running on empty.

As Paul said to the church, "*I want you to be filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from God.*" Can you see that for yourself?

I can. I can see it for you. I can see it for our church. As a matter of fact when we talk about Calvary being a

spiritually mature church I know that dream is not going to be accomplished until we change and begin refueling on a regular basis. I know that you can do this. I know that you

can find the time to stop, to be quiet, to make a connection.

That's what God wants for your soul as well. Not only an investment for today but an investment for eternity.

Prayer:

God, I sense that there are so many people who want to make that connection. Many of us in here have felt guilty for comparing ourselves, all the things we're not doing as

opposed to just stopping and stilling ourselves and making a connection with You. God, we all have different lives and work and schedules. Lord, would You give us the wisdom that we know came from You. The when in our day that we can stop and we can be quiet and we can make a connection. God, I know that You long for that connection and that our soul longs to connect with You. May this message today not be just another message to stir peoples intellect... but one that moves us to action, to stop, to be still and to make a connection. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.