In 1989 one of the most iconic advertisements in advertising history debuted and to this day it keeps going…and going…and going. What do you think I’m talking about? Yes, I’m talking about the pink energizer bunny. When it debuted in that ad in 1989 on the picture tube we called it back in the day were a bunch of other pink bunnies all powered by what battery brand? Do you remember? Duracell. The copper top brand. In that ad a pink bunny adorned w sunglasses marched onto the screen with blue flip flops and showed the world by beat to the tune of its own drum that its batteries outlasted those of the other less than life-like bunnies.

And now 30 years later that ad campaign just keeps going…and going…well you get the idea. 30 years. It has so affected us that without an explanation we describe people and things as energizer bunnies without having to explain what we mean. Why has this campaign lasted? Well, I think it has tapped into the human desire to make a device that is powered by a perpetual energy source. Humans have had this longing for centuries. You might have heard of perpetual motion devices and the little bit that I understand such devices I understand that they are impossible bc they violate the laws of thermodynamics. But that doesn’t stop legions of people over the centuries from trying to make them. Youtube is filled with them.

But this energizer bunny ad taps into the air of the culture we’re breathing that says no we might not really be able to build a device that can sustain itself forever but perhaps I can be the machine that keeps going. Perhaps I can be self-staining not dependent on anyone or anything. Even though we feel the continual need of sleep, water, food, air, rest…LOVE, relationship, Perhaps we think there is a way to cast off those restraints, the restraints of perpetual needs, for pertpetual needlessness.

Just look at all the different options we have for life. There are options available to us as farfetched as freezing ourselves when we die so oneday we can be uploaded to a robot. The pursuit to live forever. We have our phones, which gives us, we believe the ability to be all-knowing depending on what search engine we use. We can be all-present depending on the where there’s a live-stream camera. We are, we believe one step from being needless self-sufficient people.

Medical care is better than it ever has been. We spend billions of dollars every year not just to stay alive but to have a little surgery to give our bodies the timeless appearance they deserve. In a bid to be all-powerful We study the latest trends of this and that new technique in order to convince, motivate, manipulate, control. We build our homes into fortressed kingdoms of comfort with this and that new tech that enables us to see and hear the people stepping into our kingdom when we’re on the other side fo the globe.

We are nearly all-powerful. Without knowing or perhaps intentionally, we’re making ourselves into our own god. We’re so sure and confident. We truly only need God or even get a sense that we can be connected to God on a Sunday during an hour and half time worship svc that is if you’re on time. We’re so tethered to our strategies for life that we’ve cut off ourselves from God and even tangibly experiencing him or his power in our life. We de-emphasize God and emphasize our abilites. We’re almost self-sufficient.

But then there’s another response to this desire to be self sustaining. The prior one is our attempt to be self-sufficient. On the other side of the self-sustaining coin we believe we can’t ever do certain things. On one side we believe we can do everything but on the other we believe there are certain things we could never do. We can’t control our sexual impulses. You say, “I just can’t control my desires” so you just act on your feelings bc there’s nothing more authentic than you just being yourself.

You say you could never stay in your marriage relationship when you’re not happy, so you have fantasies of not being married to the person you’re married to. You could never persevere. You refuse to give thought to inviting people not just for dinner or lunch to a restaurant but into your home bc that encroaches on your kingdom of safety. That’s just too uncomfortable. You could never do things that are awkward or uncomfortable.

You refuse to commit yourself to a church family bc then your options will be limited and besides it’s hard to make friends and being a part of the same church family over a long period of time is just boring. It’s not excited. And you need excitement in your life. You could never commit to delighting in God through reading your Bible bc that’s just hard and you don’t get anything out of it anyway so why even try. Why try to do things that are hard? I mean we’re exurting a hug amount of effort on the other side of the coin to keep ourselves self-sufficeint that we have no energy left to do anything. We’re exhausted. Here we once again de-emphasize God but we emphasize our lack of ability and that gives us reasoning to not to hard things.

But listen, breath with me for a second. I don’t think you really want to be an energizer bunny of sorts. There are many of you in this room tired of pretending to be self-sufficient and your anxiety is proof of it. Your exhaustion is proof of it. There are just too many things to control and you’re realizing that you’re not good or strong enough to do it. I think most of you in this room want to be people of deep character who do hard things for the long-term pay-out but how do we get there? How can we become a dependent people, people who are not self-sufficient, people who don’t have their shields up pretending to not need other people or God. How can we do hard things and keep doing them? That’s what I hope to show you this morning.

We’re going to be looking at the portion of the Apostle’s Creed that says…about Jesus, God the son “who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, Born of the virgin Mary” and to do that we’re going to look at 2 different passages

W’re going to be in the NT books of Luke 1 and John 3. (Bibles)

First, Luke 1:26-38

26In the sixth month the angel [*x*](https://www.esv.org/Lk1.19)Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named[*y*](https://www.esv.org/Mt2.23) Nazareth, 27[*z*](https://www.esv.org/Mt1.16%3BMt1.18)to a virgin betrothed[*2*](https://www.esv.org/Luke+1/#f2-) to a man whose name was Joseph, [*a*](https://www.esv.org/Lk2.4%3BMt1.20)of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. 28And he came to her and said, “Greetings, [*b*](https://www.esv.org/Ps45.2%3BDn9.23)O favored one, [*c*](https://www.esv.org/Jg6.12)the Lord is with you!”[*3*](https://www.esv.org/Luke+1/#f3-) 29But [*d*](https://www.esv.org/Lk1.12)she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. 30And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for [*e*](https://www.esv.org/Ac7.46)you have found favor with God. 31And behold, [*f*](https://www.esv.org/Is7.14)you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and [*g*](https://www.esv.org/Lk2.21%3BMt1.21%3BMt1.25)you shall call his name Jesus. 32He will be great and will be called the Son of [*h*](https://www.esv.org/Lk1.76%3BLk6.35%3BAc7.48%3BMk5.7)the Most High. And the Lord God [*i*](https://www.esv.org/Lk1.69%3B2S7.11-13%3B2S7.16%3BPs89.4%3BPs132.11%3BIs9.6-7%3BIs16.5%3BAc2.30%3BRv3.7)will give to him the throne of [*j*](https://www.esv.org/Mt1.1)his father David, 33and he will reign over the house of Jacob [*k*](https://www.esv.org/Dn2.44%3BDn7.14%3BDn7.18%3BDn7.27%3BHb1.8%3BRv11.15%3BJn12.34)forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

34And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”[*4*](https://www.esv.org/Luke+1/#f4-)

35And the angel answered her, [*l*](https://www.esv.org/Mt1.18%3BMt1.20)“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of[*h*](https://www.esv.org/Lk1.32) the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born[*5*](https://www.esv.org/Luke+1/#f5-) will be called [*m*](https://www.esv.org/Jn6.69)holy—[*n*](https://www.esv.org/Mt14.33)the Son of God. 36And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her [*o*](https://www.esv.org/Lk1.7)who was called barren. 37For [*p*](https://www.esv.org/Gn18.14%3BMt19.26)nothing will be impossible with God.” 38And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant[*6*](https://www.esv.org/Luke+1/#f6-) of the Lord; let it be tome according to your word.” And [*q*](https://www.esv.org/Jg6.21%3BAc12.10)the angel departed from her.

Now over to John 3 (pause)

3Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is [*n*](https://www.esv.org/Jn1.13)born [*o*](https://www.esv.org/2Co5.17%3BGa6.15%3B1P1.3%3B1P1.23)again[*2*](https://www.esv.org/John+2/#f2-)he cannot [*p*](https://www.esv.org/Jn3.36)see the kingdom of God.” 4Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” 5Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born [*q*](https://www.esv.org/Eze36.25-27%3BMk16.16%3BAc2.38%3BEp5.26%3BTt3.5%3BHb10.22)of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6[*r*](https://www.esv.org/1Co15.50)That which is born of the flesh is [*s*](https://www.esv.org/Jn6.63)flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.[*3*](https://www.esv.org/John+2/#f3-) 7[*t*](https://www.esv.org/Jn5.28)Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You[*4*](https://www.esv.org/John+2/#f4-) must be born[*u*](https://www.esv.org/Jn3.3) again.’ 8[*v*](https://www.esv.org/Ec11.5%3BEze37.9)The wind[*5*](https://www.esv.org/John+2/#f5-) blows [*w*](https://www.esv.org/1Co12.11)where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

The intent of the portion of the Apostle’s creed we’re looking is/was to solidify that the person of Jesus Christ was both God and Man. He was not partly God and partly man. He was 100% God and 100% man. In both Luke and Matthew (Luke 1:35) when the angel comes to tell Jospeh in Matthew and Mary in Luke, the angel informs them both that the baby that Mary will be conceiving, carrying, and birthing will come into existence not through sexul intercourse but the baby will be conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will somehow make a baby begin to grow in the womb of Mary. Now how does that happen? I have no idea. Scripture doesn’t at all give us that information. We only need know that Jesus, the eternal son, left the Father’s side and through the power of God the Holy Spirit was conceived in Mary. God became flesh. Jesus didn’t come into existence when he was conceived and born. He has always existed. From the beginning as John 1 tells us, he has always existed. Through him all things were made. In his birth he left the Father’s side and was incarnated, made flesh. He took human form.

This has been called the virgin birth. I prefer the phrase virginal conception as it’s more descriptive of what actually happened. Let’s not confuse it, though with the immaculate reception of Frank O harris of the Pittsburg Steelers in 1972 (sports reference…check). Let’s also not confuse it with the immaculate conception which is doctrine of the Roman Catholic church and some others that purports that in order for Jesus to be sinless so he could die in our place for our sins it was necessary for Mary to be born sinless as well. We don’t find that idea anywhere in the Bible. My intent is not to bash catholics but to inform you so you inderstand.

So virgin birth is a sort of shorthand for virginal conception, that is God the son, Jesus, was conceived by the Holy Spirit to the virgin Mary. And yes, this is quite miraculous. Mary became pregnant without having sex. And listen, this was no small news to Mary. It’s interesting that when the angel tells her all the mind altering stuff her son will do and become like he’s going to be Great, he’ll be the son of God, he’ll have David’s throne, he’ll be holy…her response is not amazement (just yet) that her soon to be son is going to be Jesus but her predicament is that she is a virgin (vs Luke 1:34).

Some have tried to debunk the virgin birth by saying we misunderstand the fact that the word virgin could really just mean young woman. There’s wasn’t anything special about Jesus’s birth. He was just a regular man who was a convincing teacher. 1. Mary clearly understands it’s not her youth that’s the issue. It’s her virginity. 2. Let’s say I give you the fact that Jesus didn’t have a miraculous birth. He was just a good guy. I think your argument would follow that if he was just a normal guy born in a normal way then he wasn’t really God. But What are we to make of his self-assessment? Jesus claimed to be God. But if you say he’s not God but yet Jesus says he is, it sounds that he’s either a snake-oil salesman or he’s insane. So he can’t be a good teacher. He should be shunned.

It would seem to me that believing that Jesus really was born of a virgin is a better way.

The virgin birth is God breaking in on history to complete the plans he had established form eternity.

Look at the longing that Israel had for a savior. We see even from the beginning in what has been called the first gospel, the first good news that God was putting together a plan to right the sin of Adam and Eve and to restore creation. (Gen 3;15). The offspring of the woman will one day strike the head of the serpent and crush him forever. This longing is continued throughout the Old Testament. The people of Israle want a king who will righteously rule and bring them peace, they think it’s initially Saul but he disappoints. Then at last David brings hope, but then he too disappoints but God promises David. God makes this covenant with David…listen to it. compare it to what we heard when we read Luke 1 (2 Samuel 7:12-14b)

12[*m*](https://www.esv.org/1K2.1)When your days are fulfilled and[*n*](https://www.esv.org/1K1.21%3B1K2.10%3BAc13.36%3BDe31.16)you lie down with your fathers, [*o*](https://www.esv.org/1K8.20%3BPs132.11)I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13[*p*](https://www.esv.org/1K5.5%3B1K6.12%3B1K8.19%3B1Ch22.10%3B1Ch28.6)He shall build a house for my name, and [*q*](https://www.esv.org/2S7.16%3BPs89.4%3BPs89.29%3BPs89.36-37)I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14[*r*](https://www.esv.org/Ps89.26-27%3BHb1.5)I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.

And furthermore, let’s look at Isaiah 7:14 (combine with previous slide if possible)

14Therefore the [*c*](https://www.esv.org/Is37.30%3BIs38.7-8)Lord himself will give you a sign.[*d*](https://www.esv.org/Is9.6%3BMt1.23%3BLk1.31%3BLk1.34)Behold, the [*e*](https://www.esv.org/Gn24.43%3BEx2.8%3BPs68.25%3BPr30.19)virgin shall conceive and

bear a son, and shall call his name [*f*](https://www.esv.org/Is8.8%3BIs8.10)Immanuel.

God is breaking through into history with the virgin birth to establish his kingdom. He breaking in to establish his throne forever. In order to make this happen God can no longer stand outside of time. He can no longer relate to his people through a temple. He can no longer relate to them through temple sacrifices. He can no longer relate to them through a pillar of fire. He can no longer relate to them through the service of priests and kings. His ppresence can no longer be limited to a temple or an ark. No it’s about time to fix this thing. God knows the only way that he can crush the head of the serpent, the only way he can make his name weighty, the only way sin, adam’s sin, my sin and your sin, the only way it can be forever absolved done away with, the only way he can establish his kingdom forever is if he breaks into history himself.

And In comes Jesus. Through the power of God the Holy Spirit God himself steps into time... A baby crying in a stable.

God is making true on his promise. His promise to Adam and Eve. His promise to David. His promise to the people of Israel, and his promise to a people like you and me and people who think we’re little energizer bunnies, self-sufficient..almost but not really. Or those who think they are unable or fearful to do hard things. God in Jesus, through the HS is stepping into time in the flesh.

This all comes to a head in the gospel of Luke. Luke is showing us something not only about Jesus but about God the Holy Spirit.

It’s God the Spirit who causes Mary to conceive Jesus. Though Jesus never loses any of his divinity, any of his divine power or attributes, he is dependent upon the Holy Spirit to make Him take on human flesh. Jesus from the beginning of his earthly life, is dependent upon the power of the Spirit. Now this is interesting especially since we know and believe that Jesus never stopped being God. But Jesus intentionally hid or concealed his divinity. He never lost it. He was fully God but did not consider his divinity as something to be exploited or held on to at all cost. Why did he do that?

He did that to show us something.

OK, just to reiterate, Jesus was conceived by the Spirit. Jesus grows up, becomes a man. Then in Luke 3 when Jesus is baptized who else is on the scene? It’s the Spirit. The Spirit descends on Jesus, and immediately after Jesus’s baptism. What does the Spirit do? He leads Jesus in to the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. But what does it say of Jesus’s relationship to the Spirit? (Luke 4:1-2). Jesus, full of the holy Spirit. Jesus goes into the wilderness where he eats nothing for 40 days. Imagine the weakness. I mean I can’t go 2 hours on a sunday without turning down a Donut Country donut that volunteers bring up in here. Imagine the weakness and yet the strength that Jesus needed to turn away from Satan’s attempts to lead Jesus into sin.

But with the Spirit’s help, Jesus prevails. In his human ability he is insufficient but with the power of the Holy Spirit who is completely and fully God, God is who is the only being who is self-sufficient, The Holy Spirit provides the power and strength that Jesus needs to accomplish the task that the Spirit leads Jesus into in the first place. And in vs 14 (Luke 4:14) he leaves the desert in the power of the Spirit. If ever there was a moment when you would think Jesus would be worn out and tired unable to keep going. But no. He moves from the desert in strength, Why? IN the power of the Spirit.

Now I know I’m getting a little ahead of myself. We’ll still talk some more about the Holy Spirit later in this series. But look…What you see happening in the miraculous birth of Jesus is setting up two direct implications for us.

1. If I’m filled with the Spirit, What I see Jesus do, I can do.

Imagine to the best of your ability a life that truly flourishes. What would it look like for you to experience that kind of life, a life that is full? For Some of you that might look like restored relationships, relationships that are sacrificial and loving. A full life might look like having a career that is deeply satisfying where you’re contributing to the good of society. So the question that remains is, what stands between us and the life that is pregnant with purpose? I would answer that it’s the right desire.

Having the wrong desires and then trying to coopt or involve or expecting God to give you what would be the worst things for you will not work. It’s like trying to power your car with 4 triple A batteries, it just won’t work. Or where some of you might be at this point is you blame God for not giving you what you think will make you happy. But what we see happening at the beginning of Jesus’ conception is that Jesus is dependent upon God the Spirit. Jesus says his relationship to the Father is one characterized by Complete dependence. (John 8:29)

The Father is with him, he hasn’t left him and Jesus ALWAYS does the things that are pleasing to him. How does he do that? Does he do that bc he puts hi divine power into play. No He does that bc he’s in communion with his Father through the power of the Spirit.

In communinion with the Father he knows what the purpose of his life is. Jesus never turns away from being in relationship with the Father. He never looked to satisfaction outside of pleasing His Heavenly Father. That’s how Jesus was able to live a sinless life and that sinless life began at the moment he was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary. Jesus was dependent upon the Spirit. The all-sufficient God, jesus, was completely dependent upon the Spirit to live a life of sinless purposefulness.

In the power of the Spirit, Jesus willingly went through 40 days in the desert of being tempted by Satan. Why? So he could be could sympathize with our weakness (Hebrew 4:15-16). Jesus goes into the desert in the power of the Spirit not only so he could come out victoriously sinless but to be able to feel the full weight of being tempted by sin and then also to show us the pattern for us to follow. God wants us to see the way we can live a life that is pregnant with purpose. In order to do that we’re going to have to be dependent upon God the Holy Spirit to strengthen us in our weakness.

Yes, what you see Jesus do you can do if you have His Spirit. Like Christ in John 8:29 we can do the things that please God because through his Spirit God never turns his face away from us. He never leaves us without the strength to do what pleases him. Yes, first and foremost God wants us to be in relationship with Him. That’s why you and I were created. We were created to enjoy God and then move out into the world from that starting point. We were created to be in a relationship in which God the Father lavishes his love on us wherein we know we are accepted by him and loved. That sort of relationsip then gives you the ability to move outward towards others. If you skip the starting point, if you skip delighting in the God who created you, you’ll attempt to find delight in something else and that something else will not give you the freedom to move outward. You’ll cave in on yourself. Why? Because it can’t love you back. It won’t look at you and say you’re my beloved son/ daughter. I’m pleased with you. It will only ask you for your complete allegiance. Your job, though it can be satisfying will never tell you it’s pleased with you. Your bosses might tell you that but then what happens if that’s what you live for? You begin to live for the approval of your bosses and your mood rises or falls with the approval or lack thereof of your bosses. You might want to have the satisfaction of restored relationships or a love relationship but if a relationship is your starting point your sense of worth will depend on how much that person loves you. You’ll always be insecure because your value is determined by how much someone else values you.

But if your starting point is God’s love, then you can freely move out towards relationships not expecting them to be the sole provider of meaning in your life bc you know God the Father loves you and has already given you his approval.

How does all this work? It takes delighting in God and asking his Spirit to strnthen you to keep you from making other things god in your life. If takes asking him, not just once but regularly to give you the fruit of His Spirit. It takes practicing the presence of God on a minute by minute basis. It takes calling him into the all the moments of your life when you feel yourself moving away from him and to the false god that your desires want to pledge their allegiance to.

And you know what else it will require? Regularly meditating on God’s goodness. How do we meditate on God’s goodness? By practicing the spiritual disciplines. Reading your bible, praying, fasting, giving. Through practicing the disciplines you see in Jesus, the God who limited himself and in everything he did was in constant communuion with God the Father through the Holy Spirit. So what will we have to do? We’ll have to limit ourselves. We’ll have to express our dependence on the Spirit. And he will respond. Yes sometimes that means expressing our dependence on him when we don’t want to be dpenent on him. When you don’t want to read your Bible cry out to out. Ask him to bre present. We have a great High priest in Jesus who knows and he has given us his spirit to overcome sin and temptation.

Yes you don’t have to give in to viewing porn and pleasuring yourself. Yes. You can love your spouse even when you don’t feel like it. Yes you can show kindness and love to the coworker who just rubs you the wrong way. Yes you can stay committed to the people in this church. Yes you can avoid yelling at your kids. Yes you persevere through the difficulty. You can do that because for those who are in Christ, God has given us his Spirit. The same spirit that conceived Jesus. The same spirit that empowered Jesus to live a sinless life. The same spirit that rasised jesus from the dead, Lives in inside of us. We have him. All we have to do is acknowledge that we are not self-sufficient and that we CAN do hard things bc he has given us his Spirit to do exactly that.

But you know, just as many things as God gives his Spirit to Help us with the Virgin birth also implies something that we can’t do.

In order 2)to do what Jesus can do, you have to admit that you can’t do what only Jesus can do.

What is the name that the angel tells Mary to give the baby that’s conceived to her? Of course, we know his name is to be Jesus. The meaning of this baby’s name encapsulates all that God is going to do through Him. His name sums up the longing that Israel had since she became God’s people. His name consummates that the very first gospel in Genesis 3. His name means “God Saves”. Through Jesus, God was going to rescue his people. Through Jesus God was going to make all that sad things come untrue. Through Jesus, God was going to bring a hope that never ends to people who feel like they’re in a cycle of never-ending hopelessness. IN John 3:7-8 Jesus tells Nicodemus that in order to see that hope, He has to be born again, He has to be born from above. He has to be born through the Spirit.

In the Virgin birth you see God acting miraculously through the Spirit to accomplish what only he could accomplish. God in Jesus was entering into time by taking bone and flesh. He needed to be fully man. He needed to experience temptation to its fullest but never give in to it. And then he needed to offer himself as asacrifice to take care of sin once and for all. This was only something that God could do.

But you and I are often so determined to be completely self-sufficient to the point that we have no need for God. We become our own power source trying to do and control all possible outcomes and that usually leaves us anxious. We’re on edge, either ready to bring things back into control by a fit of rage or escape into something comforting to us so we can pretend that everything is going to be ok.

Rather than thinking we can’t do hard things, we try to drown out the uneasiness of that and take control of everything we possibly can. I’m not going to think about all the things I can’t do, so I’ll pretend. I’ll shut myself off from the people who remind me of that and I’ll shut my emotions off that bring sadness to me. I’m only going to think about the ways that I’m killin it.

Look at my success at work. I’ve reached the pinnacle. Others think I’m important and they depend on me to make decisions. I feel valued.

Look at the car I drive. I’ve finally become someone, Right? We all tend to feel that way when we get a new car or some new gadget. We feel it says something important about us. Interestingly, as much value as thing gives us we’re still not complete. We feel the need to tell everyone on social media about so they can give us value by liking our post. If they don’t’ like our post of the thing that we feel gives us value then we’re doubly de-valued. And then that new thing gets old and so we have to find something new to give us value again.

Listen you will never give yourself enough value. There is no thing that will give your life enough value. There is no person on this earth who will tell you enough times that they love you. Only God can satisfy. Jesus can only do that.

Only God, through Jesus Christ, can give you the value you’re longing for. You were created to be dependent on God not self-sufficient and independent from Him.

The virgin birth shows us that that God needed to step into time to fix our biggest problem and that problem is not the dissatisfaction that we feel in our relationships or the purposelessness we feel in our work, those are all symptoms of a bigger problem. Our biggest problem was our sin, our insistence to find our value in everything else other than the God who created us. Listen, God became flesh not so we could have some cool story of a cute little baby being born and wrapped in swaddling clothes but so you could be clothed in his righteousness. Why would you want to place your hope and value in anything else? This is good news.

Lord’s Supper