

GROW

FORMATION COURSE
OF
AGAPE STUDENTI

I AM THE VINE; YOU ARE THE BRANCHES. IF YOU REMAIN IN ME AND I IN YOU, YOU WILL BEAR MUCH FRUIT; APART FROM ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING. JOHN 15:5.

2

GROW



IN THIS COURSE...

Following Jesus is the best choice you'll ever make, and it's important to build a solid foundation as you look toward future growth in Christ. The Christian life is beautiful but not always easy. It is especially important to remember what is true about God and yourself in Christ when life becomes confusing and having faith is difficult. For example, did you know that we don't have to feel the burden of living for God in our own strength because God promises to help us through His gift of the Holy Spirit?

This training course seeks to instruct and encourage you about what is true about yourself and God, preparing you for a life of growth and all the challenges that come your way. We will learn how to study the Bible to hear from God, the basic truths of the faith, and how the Holy Spirit helps us live for God when it seems impossible. Try this training course to deepen your foundation in Christ and grow in your relationship with Him!

INDEX

Why We Must Think Rightly About God	1
Satisfied?	4
Stepping From	8
The Bible	28
Inductive Bible Study Method	30
The Holy Spirit	32



Why We Must Think Rightly About God

by A.W. Tozer

O Lord God Almighty, not the God of the philosophers and the wise but the God of the prophets and apostles; and better than all, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, may I express Thee unblamed?

They that know Thee not may call upon Thee as other than Thou art, and so worship not Thee but a creature of their own fancy; therefore enlighten our minds that we may know Thee as Thou art, so that we may perfectly love Thee and worthily praise Thee.

In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God.

For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God. This is true not only of the individual Christian, but of the company of Christians that composes the Church. Always the most revealing thing about the Church is her idea of God, just as her most significant message is what she says about Him or leaves unsaid, for her silence is often more eloquent than her speech. She can never escape the self-disclosure of her witness concerning God.

Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question, "What comes into your mind when you think about

God?" we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man. Were we able to know exactly what our most influential religious leaders think of God today, we might be able with some precision to foretell where the Church will stand tomorrow.

Without doubt, the mightiest thought the mind can entertain is the thought of God, and the weightiest word in any language is its word for God. Thought and speech are God's gifts to creatures made in His image; these are intimately associated with Him and impossible apart from Him. It is highly significant that the first word was the Word: "And the Word was with God, and the Word was God." We may speak because God spoke. In Him word and idea are indivisible.

That our idea of God correspond as nearly as possible to the true being of God is of immense importance to us. Compared with our actual thoughts about Him, our creedal statements are of little consequence. Our real idea of God may lie buried under the rubbish of conventional religious notions and may require an intelligent and vigorous search before it is finally unearthed and exposed for what it is. Only after an ordeal of painful self-probing are we likely to discover what we actually believe about God.

A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well. It is to worship what the foundation is to the temple; where it is inadequate or out of plumb the whole structure must sooner or later collapse. I believe there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God.

It is my opinion that the Christian conception of God current in these middle years of the twentieth century is so decadent as to be utterly beneath the dignity of the Most High God and actually to constitute for professed believers something amounting to a moral calamity.

All the problems of heaven and earth, though they were to confront us together and at once, would be nothing compared with the overwhelming problem of God: That He is; what He is like; and what we as moral beings must do about Him.

The man who comes to a right belief about God is relieved of ten thousand temporal problems, for he sees at once that these have to do with matters which at the most cannot concern him for very long; but even if the multiple burdens of time may be lifted from him, the one mighty single burden of eternity begins to press down upon him with a weight more crushing than all the woes of the world piled one upon another. That mighty burden is his obligation to God. It includes an instant and lifelong duty to love God with every power of mind and soul, to obey Him perfectly, and to worship Him acceptably. And when the man's laboring conscience tells him that he has done none of these things, but has from childhood been guilty of foul revolt against the Majesty in the heavens, the inner pressure of self-accusation may become too heavy to bear.

The gospel can lift this destroying burden from the mind, give beauty for ashes, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. But unless the weight of the burden is felt the gospel can mean nothing to the man; and until he sees a vision of God

high and lifted up, there will be no woe and no burden. Low views of God destroy the gospel for all who hold them.

Among the sins to which the human heart is prone, hardly any other is more hateful to God than idolatry, for idolatry is at bottom a libel on His character. The idolatrous heart assumes that God is other than He is--in itself a monstrous sin--and substitutes for the true God one made after its own likeness. Always this God will conform to the image of the one who created it and will be base or pure, cruel or kind, according to the moral state of the mind from which it emerges.

A god begotten in the shadows of a fallen heart will naturally be no true likeness of the true God. "Thou thoughtest," said the Lord to the wicked man in the psalm, "that I was altogether such an one as thyself." Surely this must be a serious affront to the Most High God before whom cherubim and seraphim continually do cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth."

Let us beware lest we in our pride accept the erroneous notion that idolatry consists only in kneeling before visible objects of adoration, and that civilized peoples are therefore free from it. The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him. It begins in the mind and may be present where no overt act of worship has taken place. "When they knew God," wrote Paul, "they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

Then followed the worship of idols fashioned after the likeness of men and birds and beasts and creeping things. But this series of degrading acts began in the mind. Wrong ideas about God are not only the fountain from which the polluted waters of idolatry flow; they are themselves idolatrous. The idolater simply imagines things about God and acts as if they were true.

Perverved notions about God soon rot the religion in which they appear. The long career of Israel demonstrates this clearly enough, and the history of the Church confirms it. So necessary to the Church is a lofty concept of God that when that concept in any measure declines, the Church with her worship and her moral standards declines along with it. The first step down for any church is taken when it surrenders its high opinion of God.

Before the Christian Church goes into eclipse anywhere there must first be a corrupting of her simple basic theology. She simply gets a wrong answer to the question, "What is God like?" and goes on from there. Though she may continue to cling to a sound nominal creed, her practical working creed has become false. The masses of her adherents come to believe that God is different from what He actually is; and that is heresy of the most insidious and deadly kind.

The heaviest obligation lying upon the Christian Church today is to purify and elevate her concept of God until it is once more worthy of Him--and of her. In all her prayers and labors this should have first place. We do the greatest service to the next generation of Christians by passing on to them undimmed and undiminished that noble concept of God which we received from our Hebrew and Christian fathers of generations past. This will prove of greater value to them than anything that art or science can devise.

*O God of Bethel, by whose hand
Thy people still are fed;
Who through this weary pilgrimage
Hast all our fathers led!
Our vows, our prayers we now present
Before Thy throne of grace:
God of our fathers! be the God
Of their succeeding race.*

Philip Doddridge

**Excerpt from The Knowledge Of The Holy, A. W. Tozer
Reprinted by permission Harper & Row Publishers**

Satisfied?

Satisfaction: (n.) fulfillment of one's needs, longings, or desires

What words would you use to describe your current experience as a Christian?

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Growing | Frustrated |
| Disappointing | Fulfilled |
| Forgiven | Stuck |
| Struggling | Joyful |
| Defeated | Exciting |
| Up and down | Empty |
| Discouraged | Duty |
| Intimate | Mediocre |
| Painful | Dynamic |
| Guilty | Vital |
| So-so | Others? |

Satisfied?

2

Do you desire more? Jesus said, *“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him”* (John 7:37, 38).

What did Jesus mean? John, the biblical author, went on to explain, *“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”* (John 7:39).

Jesus promised that God’s Holy Spirit would satisfy the thirst, or deepest longings, of all who believe in Jesus Christ. However, many Christians do not understand the Holy Spirit or how to experience Him in their daily lives.

—>*The following principles will help you understand and enjoy God’s Spirit.*

3

The Divine Gift

Divine: (adj.) given by God

God has given us His Spirit so that we can experience intimacy with Him and enjoy all He has for us.

The Holy Spirit is the source of our deepest satisfaction.

The Holy Spirit is God’s permanent presence with us.

Jesus said, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth” (John 14:16, 17).

The Holy Spirit enables us to understand and experience all God has given us.

“We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us” (1 Corinthians 2:12).

The Holy Spirit enables us to experience many things:

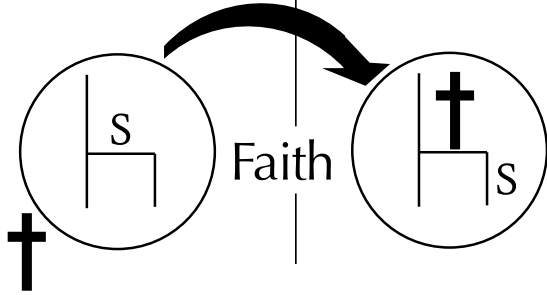
- A genuine new spiritual life (John 3:1–8).
- The assurance of being a child of God (Romans 8:15, 16).
- The infinite love of God (Romans 5:5; Ephesians 3:18, 19).

4

4

Life Without the Spirit
Before Receiving Christ

Life With the Spirit
After Receiving Christ



The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14).

The spiritual man makes judgments about all things... We have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:15, 16).

But those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit (Romans 8:5, NLT).

—>Why are many Christians not satisfied in their experience with God?

5 6

The Present Danger

Danger: (n.) a thing that may cause injury, loss, or pain

We cannot experience intimacy with God and enjoy all He has for us if we fail to depend on His Spirit.

People who trust in their own efforts and strength to live the Christian life will experience failure and frustration, as will those who live to please themselves rather than God.

We cannot live the Christian life in our own strength.

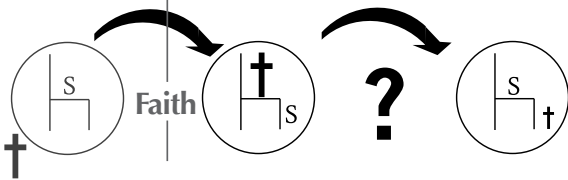
“Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?” (Galatians 3:3).

We cannot enjoy all God desires for us if we live by our self-centered desires.

“For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want” (Galatians 5:17).

Three Kinds of Lifestyles

A Self-centered Life | A Christ-centered Life | A Self-centered Life
Before Receiving Christ | After Receiving Christ



“Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual, but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?” (1 Corinthians 3:1–3).

—>How can we develop a lifestyle of depending on the Spirit?

7 8

The Intimate Journey

Journey: (n.) any course from one experience to another

By walking in the Spirit we increasingly experience intimacy with God and enjoy all He has for us.

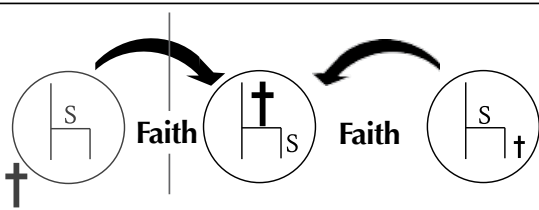
Walking in the Spirit moment by moment is a lifestyle. It is learning to depend upon the Holy Spirit for His abundant resources as a way of life.

As we walk in the Spirit, we have the ability to live a life pleasing to God.

“So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature... Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16, 25).

As we walk in the Spirit, we experience intimacy with God and all He has for us.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22, 23).



Faith (trust in God and His promises) is the only way a Christian can live by the Spirit.

Spiritual breathing is a powerful word picture which can help you experience moment-by-moment dependence upon the Spirit.

Exhale: Confess your sin the moment you become aware of it—agree with God concerning it and thank Him for His forgiveness, according to 1 John 1:9 and Hebrews 10:1–25. Confession requires repentance—a change in attitude and action.

Inhale: Surrender control of your life to Christ, and rely upon the Holy Spirit to fill you with His presence and power by faith, according to His **command** (Ephesians 5:18) and **promise** (1 John 5:14, 15).

—>How does the Holy Spirit fill us with His power?

9 10

2. Am I ready now to confess my sins? (1 John 1:9) Sin grieves God's Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). But God in His love has forgiven all of your sins—past, present, and future—because Christ has died for you.
3. Do I sincerely desire to be directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit? (John 7:37–39)

By faith claim the fullness of the Spirit according to His command and promise:

God **COMMANDS** us to be filled with the Spirit.

“...be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18).

God **PROMISES** He will always answer when we pray according to His will.

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him” (1 John 5:14, 15).

—>How to pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit...

11 12

The Empowering Presence

Empower: (v.) to give ability to

We are filled with the Spirit by faith, enabling us to experience intimacy with God and enjoy all He has for us.

The essence of the Christian life is what God does in and through us, not what we do for God. Christ's life is reproduced in the believer by the power of the Holy Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit is to be directed and empowered by Him.

By faith, we experience God's power through the Holy Spirit.

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (Ephesians 3:16, 17).

Three important questions to ask yourself:

1. Am I ready now to surrender control of my life to our Lord Jesus Christ? (Romans 12:1, 2)

The Turning Point

Turning point: time when a decisive change occurs

We are filled with the Holy Spirit by faith alone.

Sincere prayer is one way of expressing our faith. The following is a suggested prayer:

Dear Father, I need You. I acknowledge that I have sinned against You by directing my own life. I thank You that You have forgiven my sins through Christ's death on the cross for me. I now invite Christ to again take His place on the throne of my life. Fill me with the Holy Spirit as You commanded me to be filled, and as You promised in Your Word that You would do if I asked in faith. I pray this in the name of Jesus. I now thank You for filling me with the Holy Spirit and directing my life.

Does this prayer express the desire of your heart? If so, you can pray right now and trust God to fill you with His Holy Spirit.

How to know that you are filled by the Holy Spirit

- Did you ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit?
- Do you know that you are now filled with the Holy Spirit?
- On what authority? (On the trustworthiness of God Himself and His Word: Hebrews 11:6; Romans 14:22, 23.)

As you continue to depend on God's Spirit moment by moment you will experience and enjoy intimacy with God and all He has for you—a truly rich and satisfying life.

An important reminder...

Do Not Depend on Feelings

The promise of God's Word, the Bible—not our feelings—is our authority. The Christian lives by faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God Himself and His Word. Flying in an airplane can illustrate the relationship among fact (God and His Word), faith (our trust in God and His Word), and feeling (the result of our faith and obedience) (John 14:21).



To be transported by an airplane, we must place our faith in the trustworthiness of the aircraft and the pilot who flies it. Our feelings of confidence or fear do not affect the ability of the airplane to transport us, though they do affect how much we enjoy the trip. In the same way, we as Christians do not depend on feelings or emotions, but we place our faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God and the promises of His Word.

Now That You are Filled with the Holy Spirit

Thank God that the Spirit will enable you:

- To glorify Christ with your life (John 16:14).
- To grow in your understanding of God and His Word (1 Corinthians 2:14, 15).
- To live a life pleasing to God (Galatians 5:16–23).

—> *Continued on the next page . . .*

13 14

Remember the promise of Jesus:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”
(Acts 1:8).

If you would like additional resources on the Holy Spirit, please go to www.campuscrusade.org

If this booklet has been helpful to you, please share it with someone else.

© Copyright 2007 Bright Media Foundation and Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc.
Formerly Copyright 2001-2007 Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc.

Adapted from *Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-filled Life?* written by Bill Bright, © 1966. Published by Campus Crusade for Christ, 375 Hwy 74 South, Suite A, Peachtree City, GA 30269.
www.campuscrusade.org

15

Satisfied!

EAN13: 978-1-56399-172-1



7



STEPPING

FROM

UNCERTAINTY

TO

CONFIDENCE

Common Questions and Uncertainties

Who is Jesus?

Is He really who I think He is?

What does He want to do in my life?

What does He really want from me?

What has happened to me?

Did I do it right? Do I need to do it again?

Was I sincere enough?

Can I lose my relationship with Him?

I. COMPARING OUR STORIES

Everyone experiences uncertainties in their relationship with God at one time or another.

MY EXPERIENCE ...

YOUR EXPERIENCE ...

What questions or uncertainties have you had about Jesus Christ and your relationship with Him?

2. CONSIDERING OUR STRUGGLES

Consider the impact doubts and uncertainty have on relationships. Imagine a new marriage relationship that is filled with doubts...

Doubts about the relationship:
WILL THIS REALLY LAST?

Doubts about the partner:
IS THIS THE RIGHT PERSON?

Doubts about themselves:
AM I REALLY COMMITTED?

What impact would doubts like these have on a marriage? Why?

How could similar doubts have an impact on our relationship with Jesus? Why?

⁹We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. ¹⁰Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. ¹¹And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

STEPPING FROM

UNCERTAINTY TO

CONFIDENCE

3. EXPLORING THE SOLUTION

John wrote a letter to help give confidence to believers who were becoming unsettled by false teachers (1 John). As you read the portion of Scripture, use the questions to help you discover how John dealt with the problem of uncertainty.

(5:9)

What is testimony?

What makes testimony trustworthy?

What has God made testimony about?

(5:10)

Since God has given us testimony, what two options exist?

What is true if we believe God?

What is true if we don't believe God?

(5:11)

God's testimony says two things are true?

What are they?

(5:12)

What two kinds of people are there?

Is it possible to have the Son and not have the life?

Is it possible to not have the Son and still have the life?

Is it possible to think you have the life but don't?

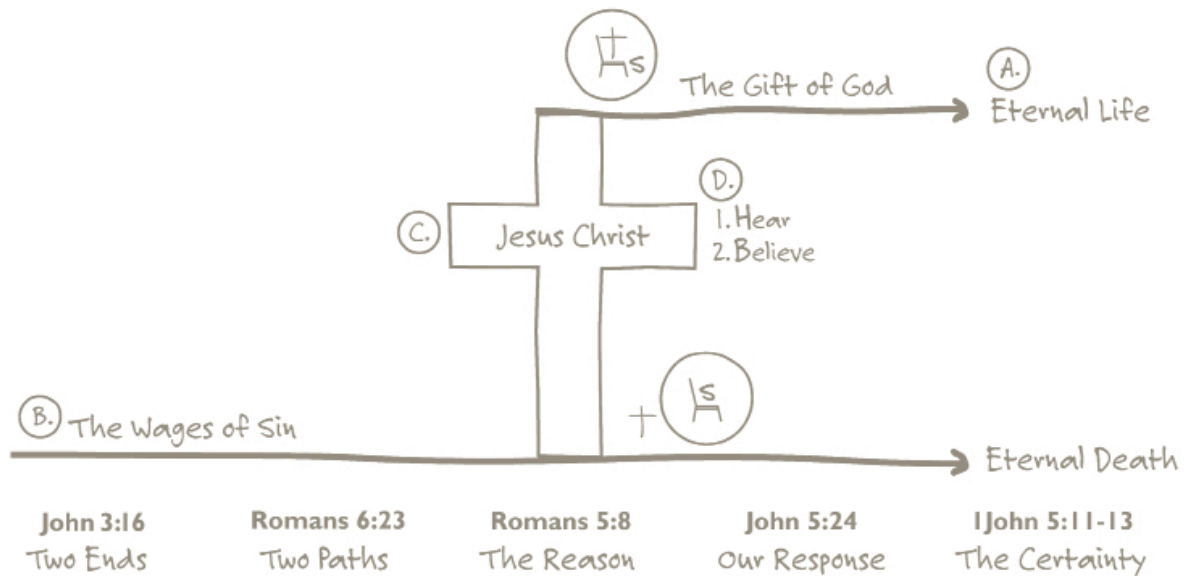
Is it possible to have the life but not be sure?

(5:13)

To whom is John writing these things?

Why does he write them? Does John believe we can know we have eternal life?

4. EXAMINING THE SKETCH



A. READ JOHN 3:16.

What two possible destinies are described in this verse?

Which destiny does God desire for us? Why?

B. READ ROMANS 6:23.

What have we earned? How?

What does God desire to give us? How?

C. READ ROMANS 5:8.

What compelled God to give His Son to die for us?

Why did Jesus have to die?

D. READ JOHN 5:24.

According to this verse, what is my part in salvation?

Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. He rose from the dead and is now alive as the Lord of life. Each person who hears the message, turns from going their own independent way, and trusts Jesus Christ to be their Savior, passes from "death" to "life."

LOOK BACK AT 1 JOHN 5:11-13.

According to this sketch, where is the person who has Christ?

Where is the person who does not have Christ?

Where would you put yourself on the sketch and why?

On a scale of 0-100%, how sure are you that you now have eternal life?

SUMMARY

Based upon the promises given by God, everyone who has the Son can be assured that they have eternal life with God.

5. TAKING STEPS

John wrote many other things to help give us confidence:

TO THOSE WHO WERE UNCERTAIN ABOUT JESUS AND WHETHER THEY BELIEVED IN HIM, HE WROTE THE GOSPEL OF JOHN (SEE JOHN 20:30-31).

Read the Gospel of John.

Look for the evidence that Jesus is the Son of God.

Mark the explanations of how we are to respond to Him.

TO THOSE WHO BELIEVED IN JESUS BUT WERE UNCERTAIN ABOUT ETERNAL LIFE, HE WROTE THE LETTER KNOWN AS I JOHN (SEE I JOHN 5:13).

Read I John.

Mark the statements with the word know.

Look for what these statements tell us about:

WHAT WE ARE TO BELIEVE.

WHAT WE ARE TO DO.

HOW WE ARE TO LOVE.

NEXT CONCEPT

FROM UNCERTAINTY TO CONFIDENCE

FROM FEELINGS OF UNWORTHINESS TO FORGIVENESS

FROM BEING UNABLE TO EMPOWERED

FROM BEING UNPREPARED TO EQUIPPED

FROM BEING UNDEVELOPED TO MATURITY

How would you change your lifestyle and behavior if Jesus were always physically present with you? Would you have to quit doing certain things so that you would not offend Him? What attitudes would you try to change? Your sins and struggles will affect how you experience your relationship with Christ, for He is with you always. (Hebrews 13:5).



LIFE CONCEPTS

I. COMPARING OUR STORIES

Though Christians are forgiven, we all still struggle with sin and failure.

MY EXPERIENCE ...

YOUR EXPERIENCE ...

Since receiving Christ, to what degree have you been aware of similar struggles?

STEPPING
FROM
FEELINGS OF

UNWORTHINESS

TO

FORGIVENESS

2. CONSIDERING OUR STRUGGLES

HOW would you feel if you knew you had failed another person who was very important to you?

HOW would these feelings affect your actions and responses in the relationship?

HOW would it impact you if you didn't know that the other person had forgiven you?

WHAT difference does forgiveness make in a relationship?

Sin has a similar impact in our relationship with Christ.
HOW?

1 JOHN 1:5–2:2

5This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 7But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 8If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. 2My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

STEPPING FROM FEELINGS

OF UNWORTHINESS TO

FORGIVENESS

3. EXPLORING THE SOLUTION

John is writing to a group of believers who have become unsettled by false teachers. In this section, he is dealing with the wrong attitudes about sin in the teaching of these individuals. All of his responses are based on the truth about who God is and what it is like to live in a relationship with Him.

THE FOUNDATION (1:5)

What does it mean that God is light?

What does light do in everyday life?

How would God's character do a similar thing?

1. FALSE CLAIM (1:6)

RIGHT RESPONSE (1:7)

As we live in a right relationship with God, what is happening to our sin?

2. FALSE CLAIM (1:8)

RIGHT RESPONSE (1:9)

What are we to do about our sin?
What does confess mean?
What does God do as we confess our sins?

3. FALSE CLAIM (1:10)

RIGHT RESPONSE (2:1-2)

What should we try to do about sin?
What is the ultimate solution to our sin?

SUMMARY

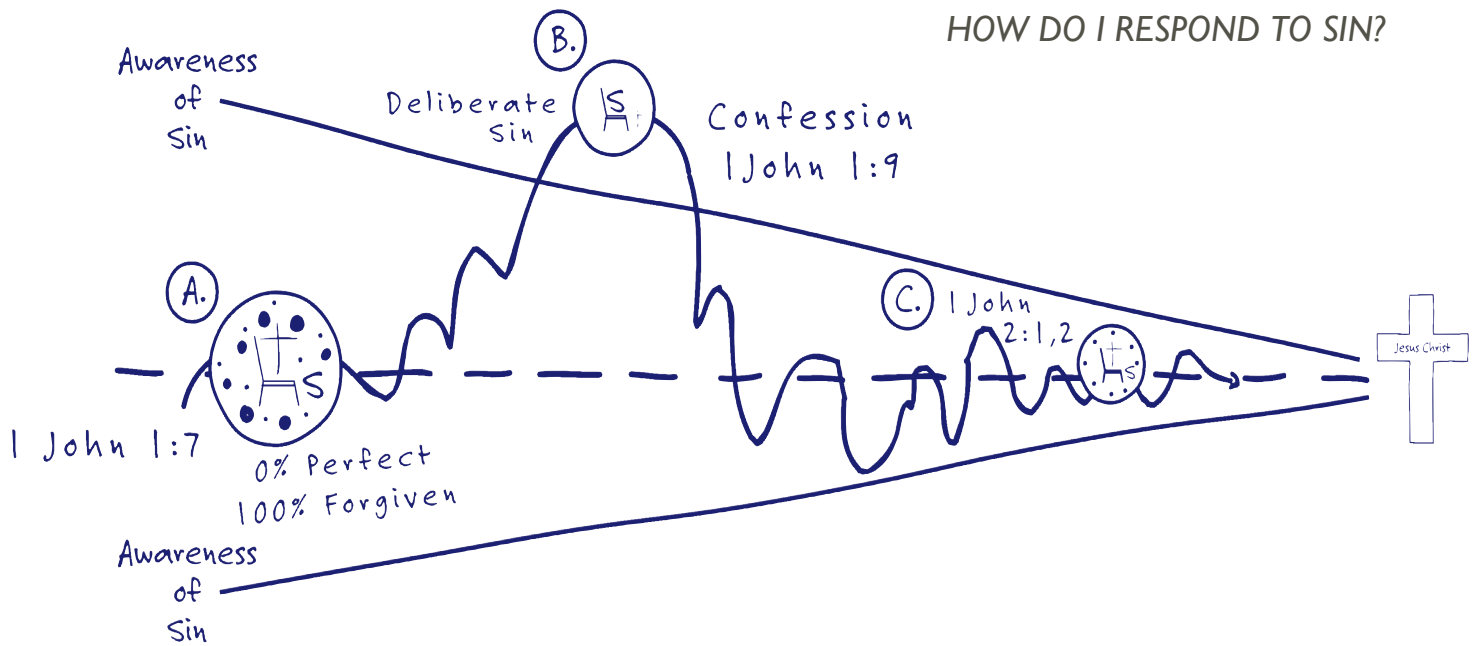
THE THREE WRONG APPROACHES:

My sin doesn't matter.
There is nothing wrong with me.
I've done nothing wrong.

THE THREE RIGHT RESPONSES:

Walk with God in light of who He is.
Openly agree with God about your sin. Seek to avoid sin.

THE ISSUE:
HOW DO I RESPOND TO SIN?



4. EXAMINING THE SKETCH

A. When I first trusted Christ as my Savior, how many areas of my life were perfect? How many of my sins were forgiven when I came to Christ?

According to I John 1:7, how does God deal with the sins and shortcomings of which I'm not aware?

B. According to I John 1:9, what should I do when I deliberately disobey God and my life passes outside of the lines?
Confession involves agreeing with God.

1. Agree that we have sinned.
2. Agree that he has forgiven it.
3. Turn away from the sin.

C. The longer I walk with God, what will happen to my awareness of sin? Why?

According to I John 2:1-2, what should my attitude be toward sin? Why?

SUMMARY

To walk in the light is...
to live in a love relationship with God in light of His character.
to openly agree with God about my sin.
to seek to avoid sin as I become more conscious of what is displeasing to God.

5. TAKING STEPS

Three steps will help you live these truths.

1. CLAIM CHRIST'S CLEANSING.

In prayer, thank God for continuing to cleanse you from all sin.

2. CONFESS SPECIFIC SINS.

On your own, make a list on paper of any sin of which you are currently aware. Confess it to God, writing 1 John 1:9 across the page. Tear up the list. This is a visual reminder that Jesus Christ has cleansed you from your sins by His death.

3. CHOOSE TO AVOID SIN.

Be aware that by ourselves, we lack the ability to change or avoid sin. We must rely on God's power.

NEXT CONCEPT

FROM UNCERTAINTY TO CONFIDENCE

FROM FEELINGS OF UNWORTHINESS TO FORGIVENESS

FROM BEING UNABLE TO EMPOWERED

FROM BEING UNPREPARED TO EQUIPPED

FROM BEING UNDEVELOPED TO MATURITY

Suppose you did everything you could to imitate a world-class musician, a professional athlete, or another famous person. The level of frustration you would experience would be in direct proportion to the difference in ability between you and your hero. Jesus Christ is the only one who ever perfectly lived the Christian life. We are to imitate Him (Ephesians 5:1-2). How much difference is there between His ability to live the Christian life and yours?



LIFE CONCEPTS

I. COMPARING OUR STORIES

Because of our relationship with Christ, we have a genuine desire to live the Christian life. Yet we often find ourselves failing to do so. In fact, the Christian life often seems impossible to live.

MY EXPERIENCE ...

YOUR EXPERIENCE ...

Since receiving Christ, to what degree have you experienced frustration in your Christian life?

STEPPING

FROM

BEING UNABLE

TO

EMPOWERED

2. CONSIDERING OUR STRUGGLES

WHAT thoughts and emotions occur when you are unable to do something you want to do? Why?

WHEN we are frustrated with our inability to live the Christian life, we should consider four possible reasons:

- We lack the necessary power or ability to live the Christian life.
- We have the power and ability, but we don't know that we have it.
- We know we have the power and ability, but we don't know how to use it.
- We know how to use the power and ability, but we choose not to use it.

In what follows, we will discover the first reason isn't a possibility for a true believer, and we will begin to learn about the power we have been given and how we are to use it.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:9-3:3

9However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” – 10but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. 14The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man’s judgment: 16“For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ. 3Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly – mere infants in Christ. 2I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. 3You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?

Circle the word *Spirit* each time the word is used.

STEPPING FROM

BEING UNABLE TO

EMPOWERED

3. EXPLORING THE SOLUTION

Paul is writing to a group of believers struggling to live consistent Christian lives. They have become divisive and even formed cliques, claiming to follow different leaders. In this section, Paul is discussing the power or ability needed to understand God’s truth.

WHO IS THE SPIRIT?

The Spirit works in many ways in the believer’s life. What is one of His purposes according to 2:12?

Three spiritual conditions are described in this passage. Note how each spiritual condition influences the Spirit’s ability to fulfill this purpose.

1. WHAT IS THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF THE PERSON IN 2:14?

How much spiritual truth does this person comprehend? Why?

2. WHAT IS THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF THE PERSON IN 2:15-16?

How much spiritual truth is this person able to comprehend? Why?

3. WHAT IS THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE IN 3:1-3?

How much spiritual truth are they able to comprehend? Why?

How would you summarize what Paul is saying about the Spirit and our spiritual condition?

4. EXAMINING THE SKETCH

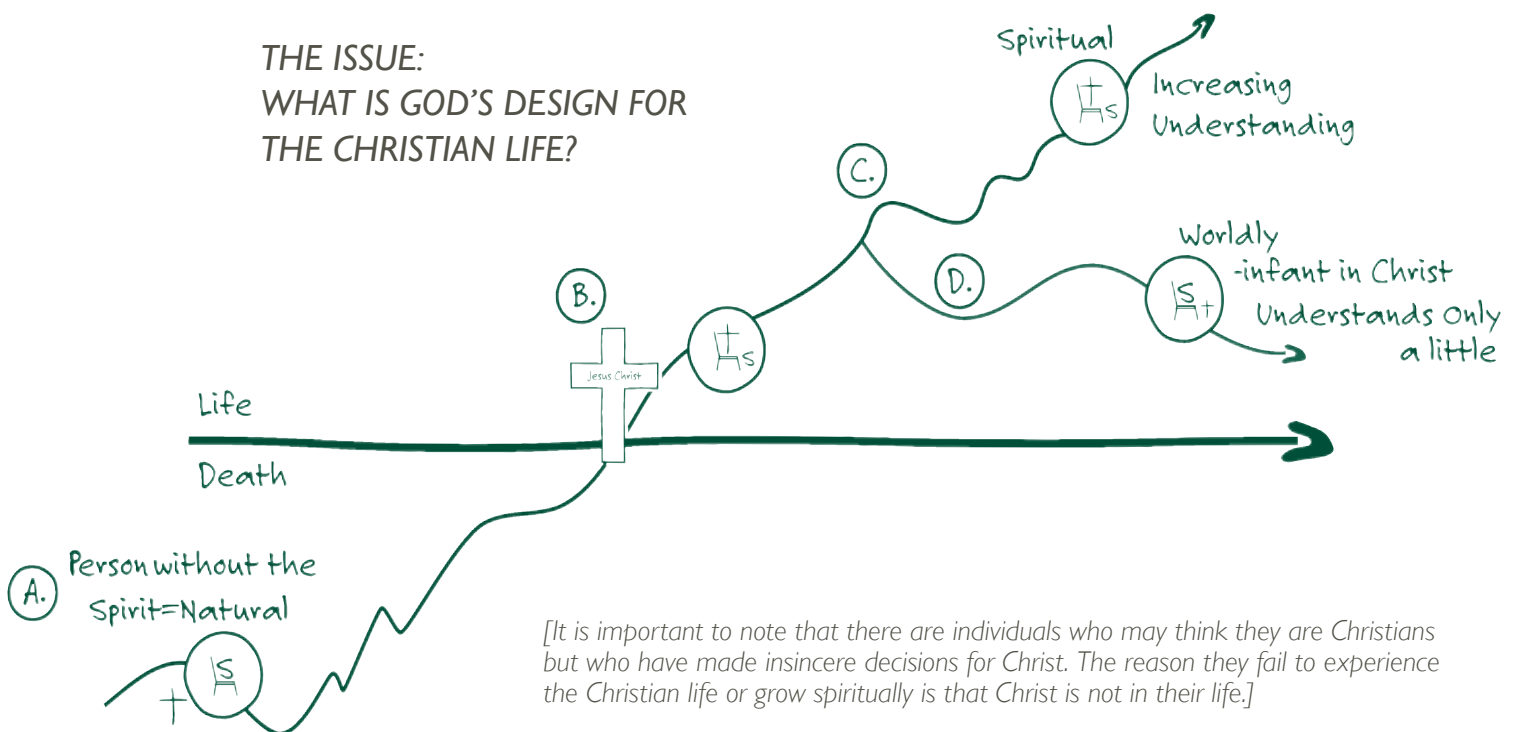
A. The lower circle represents my life before I received Christ. What was my spiritual condition? What was true of my ability to understand the things of God? Why?

B. When I received Christ and He entered my life, I became spiritually alive and was given the gift of the Holy Spirit promised to every true believer. (John 7:37-39)

C. God intends for me to continue growing in my relationship with Him, learning how to live the Christian life and relying on His Spirit to work within me to give me power and understanding. According to Galatians 5:22-23, what would be the result?

D. But there is another possibility, I could fail to grow in my Christian life and never learn how to experience the power God has given me by His Spirit. What would my life be like then?

THE ISSUE:
WHAT IS GOD'S DESIGN FOR
THE CHRISTIAN LIFE?



SUMMARY

When a person begins a relationship with Christ, it's important to grow in the experience of the Spirit in order to understand spiritual truth and have the power to live the Christian life. God's design is for us to be filled (that is, directed and empowered) by the Holy Spirit as an ongoing experience.

5. TAKING STEPS

Read Ephesians 5:18. What are we commanded to avoid? Why?
What are we commanded to do?
The Spirit-filled life is the Christ-directed life by which Christ lives
His life in and through us in the power of the Holy Spirit.

WE ARE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT BY FAITH.

Jesus pictured believers as coming to Him to drink from the living water, which is His Spirit (John 7:37-39). Are you thirsty?

D - DESIRE Do you desire to be filled (that is, directed and empowered) with the Spirit?

R - REPENT Are you turning from known sin and confessing it to God?

Y - YIELD Are you surrendering control of your life to Christ?

If so, pray in faith asking God to fill you with His Spirit as He commanded you to be.
Thank Him that He will direct and empower your life as you continue to trust Him.

NEXT CONCEPT

FROM UNCERTAINTY TO CONFIDENCE

FROM FEELINGS OF UNWORTHINESS TO FORGIVENESS

FROM BEING UNABLE TO EMPOWERED

FROM BEING UNPREPARED TO EQUIPPED

FROM BEING UNDEVELOPED TO MATURITY

Anyone can experience an inner struggle over conflicting desires to do what is right and wrong. But the believer will often experience this struggle more intensely. For the believer, it is not simply a matter of obeying the conscience or some rule. It involves our genuine desire to please our new Master which conflicts with the old ways we pleased ourselves. It can also involve a conflict between our desire to experience the life God wants to give us and the desire to live life our own way. The good news is that experiencing these struggles is evidence of a genuine change in our lives as a result of our new relationship with Christ.



LIFE CONCEPT



STEPPING
FROM
BEING

UNPREPARED

TO

EQUIPPED

I. COMPARING OUR STORIES

The Christian life isn't struggle-free. Yet most Christians are unprepared for the inner struggles they will experience.

MY EXPERIENCE ...

YOUR EXPERIENCE ...

Since receiving Christ, to what degree have you experienced an inner struggle over conflicting desires—that is, wanting to please yourself versus wanting to please Christ?

2. CONSIDERING OUR STRUGGLES

Why do you think most believers are unprepared for these inner struggles?

HOW do people feel when they are faced with a significant challenge for which they are not prepared?

FOR EXAMPLE, HOW would you feel if you were enrolled in an upper level language course for a language in which you had never learned the basics?

In a similar way, we must master the basics of the Christian life to prepare for the challenges that lie ahead.



GALATIANS 5:16-26.

6 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. 17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. 19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

STEPPING FROM BEING UNPREPARED TO EQUIPPED

3. EXPLORING THE SOLUTION

Paul wrote this letter to a group of believers who were also facing this struggle. They were being told by others that the solution was to try harder at doing what was right by following the Law—the written commandments explaining what is right and wrong. But Paul wanted them to realize they did not have the power in themselves to do what was right or follow the Law. Neither do we.

THE CONFLICT (5:16-18)

Who are the opponents?

The word flesh is used for sinful nature in some translations. When used in this way, it does not refer to the physical aspect of people. Rather, it is that aspect within people which leads them to live independent of God, in opposition to Him and His ways. Compare Romans 8:5-8.

THE CONSEQUENCES (5:19-23)

The source of our desires will determine the nature of what is produced.

What happens when the desires of the sinful nature go unchecked? (5:19-21)

What is produced when we walk by the Spirit? (5:22-23)

Notice that the Spirit always leads us to do what is right, never to do what is wrong. (5:23)

THE CONCLUSION (5:24-25)

According to verse 24, how has our relationship to the sinful nature changed?

Since we now live by the Spirit, what should characterize our relationship with the Spirit? (5:25)

SUMMARY

What the Bible explains, we should believe. What is true about yourself?

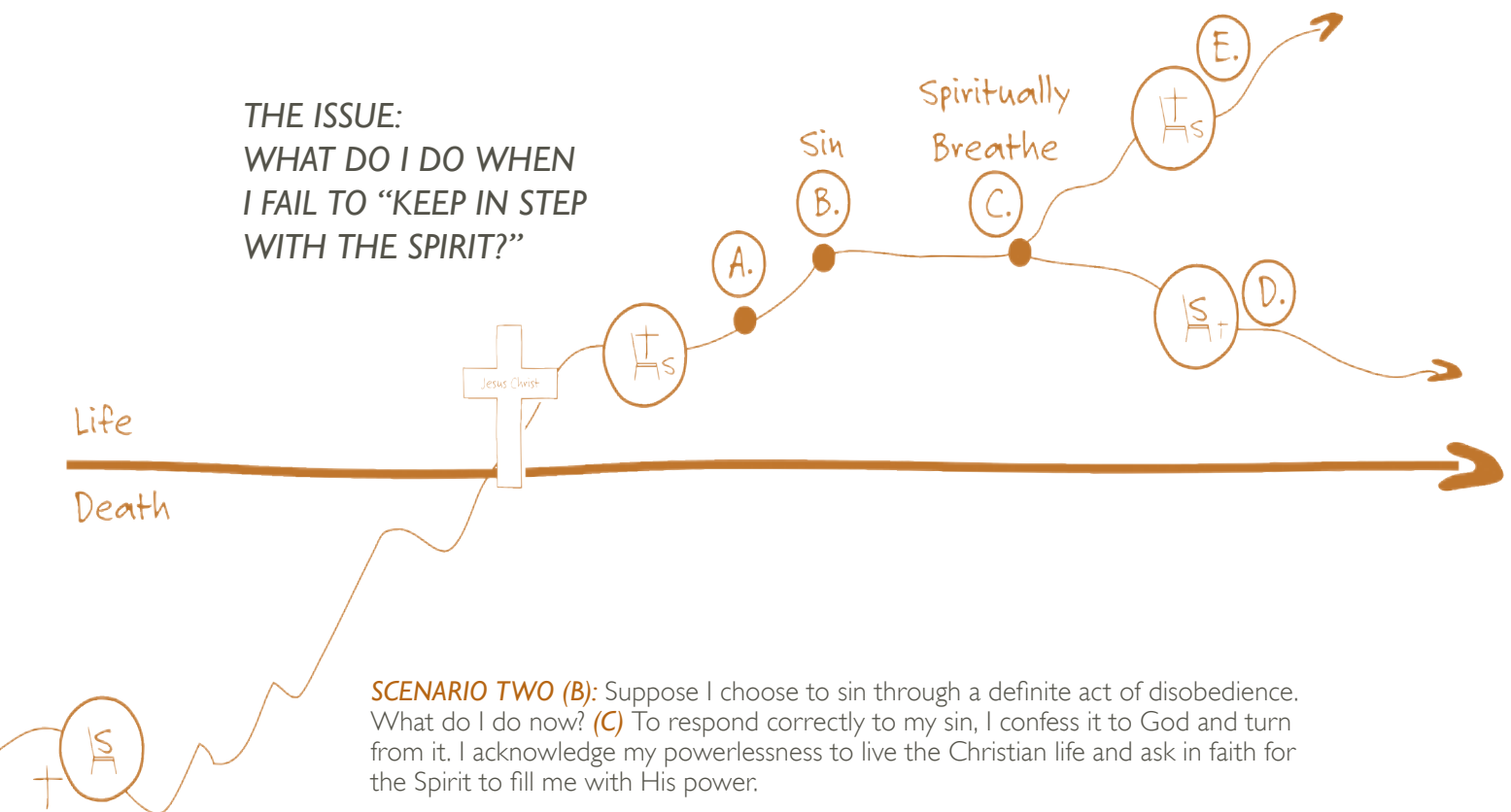
What the Bible commands, we should do. What are you commanded to do?

What the Bible promises, we should expect. What are the results in my life?

4. EXAMINING THE SKETCH

As I grow in my relationship with God, there are two common scenarios.

SCENARIO ONE (A): Though I sincerely desire to please God, sometimes I become aware of an area of my life that is displeasing to Him, either an attitude or an action. I am not intending to disobey. It's just that I am learning more about what God is like and becoming more aware of sin. What do I do? I simply thank God that He has already forgiven my sins, claim His love and forgiveness by faith and trust Him for the power to change in that area. This allows me to continue enjoying fellowship with Him.



A simple way to remember this is by using the word picture of "spiritual breathing." Physically, we exhale impure air and inhale the pure. Spiritually, I exhale by confessing my sin (1 John 1:9) and inhale by claiming the Spirit's power (Ephesians 5:18).

What would happen if I refused to deal with my sin? (D) Over time, I would find myself becoming more and more worldly, like the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). But as I deal with my sin and rely upon the Spirit (E), I will become more spiritually mature and see the fruit of the Spirit produced within me (Galatians 5:22-23).

As you look at this sketch, where do you see yourself in this process?

5. TAKING STEPS

Four steps can help us put these truths into action:

RECOGNIZE the conflict.

REMEMBER the source of the conflict—the Spirit's desires versus the desires of the sinful nature.

REJECT the desires of the sinful nature.

RELY on the Spirit's power to produce His fruit in our lives.

Consider an example. Suppose your roommate does something wrong to you:

RECOGNIZE the conflict between your desire to be mad and get even and the Spirit's desire to forgive and restore the relationship.

REMEMBER the source of this inner struggle is between the sin nature and the Spirit.

REJECT the desires of the sinful nature to be mad or get even.

RELY on the Spirit's power to produce genuine love and forgiveness and provide wisdom in how to respond.

Is there an area where you are currently struggling? How would you apply these steps?

NEXT CONCEPT

FROM UNCERTAINTY TO CONFIDENCE

FROM FEELINGS OF UNWORTHINESS TO FORGIVENESS

FROM BEING UNABLE TO EMPOWERED

FROM BEING UNPREPARED TO EQUIPPED

FROM BEING UNDEVELOPED TO MATURITY

There are two basic reasons why people aren't mature. One is time and the other is health. The world is full of immature people. Some are children who are healthy but have not had the time to grow. They, of course, are normal. Others have had adequate time but have failed to mature either physically, emotionally or socially. They are a source of concern. Their immaturity isn't normal and can indicate either a health problem or an unhealthy growth environment. Spiritual growth has many similarities to growth in the other dimensions of life.



LIFE CONCEPT

I. COMPARING OUR STORIES

The Christian life is a life of growth in our relationship with Christ. Spiritual maturity is attained over time, not in an instant.

MY EXPERIENCE ...

YOUR EXPERIENCE ...

How much of a spiritual foundation have you received for your Christian life—either from your family or your religious background?

What one or two things from your background do you think will be most helpful in your Christian life?

STEPPING

FROM BEING

UNDEVELOPED

TO

MATURITY

2. CONSIDERING OUR STRUGGLES

WHY do you think many believers fail to grow spiritually at a normal, healthy rate?

WHAT might be some evidence of spiritual immaturity?

HOW would you feel if, after many years, you looked back and realized you had failed to grow in the most important area of life, your relationship with God?

We need a healthy environment for spiritual growth to ensure that we mature in our relationship with God.

ACTS 2:42-47

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.



**STEPPING FROM
BEING UNDEVELOPED TO
MATURITY**

3. EXPLORING THE SOLUTION

The Book of Acts is an historical account of the first believers' experiences after the resurrection of Jesus. In the second chapter, Peter (one of the early leaders) addresses a large crowd and many become new believers. This passage is about that group of new believers and what characterized their spiritual growth.

There are four characteristics of growing Christians found in this passage:

1. DEVOTED TO THE WORD (2:42)

What does it mean to be devoted to something?

Who were the apostles?

What did they teach?
(See Matthew 28:18-20)

How could we devote ourselves to this same teaching today?

2. DEVOTED TO FELLOWSHIP (2:42)

What is fellowship?

What motivated the believers to gather together so often? (2:46)

How would close relationships like these help us in the Christian life?

How can we experience this kind of fellowship today?

3. DEVOTED TO PRAYER (2:42)

What is prayer?

What motivated the believers to devote themselves to prayer?

How can we devote ourselves to prayer today?

4. HAVING AN IMPACT (2:47)

Why did other people join them?

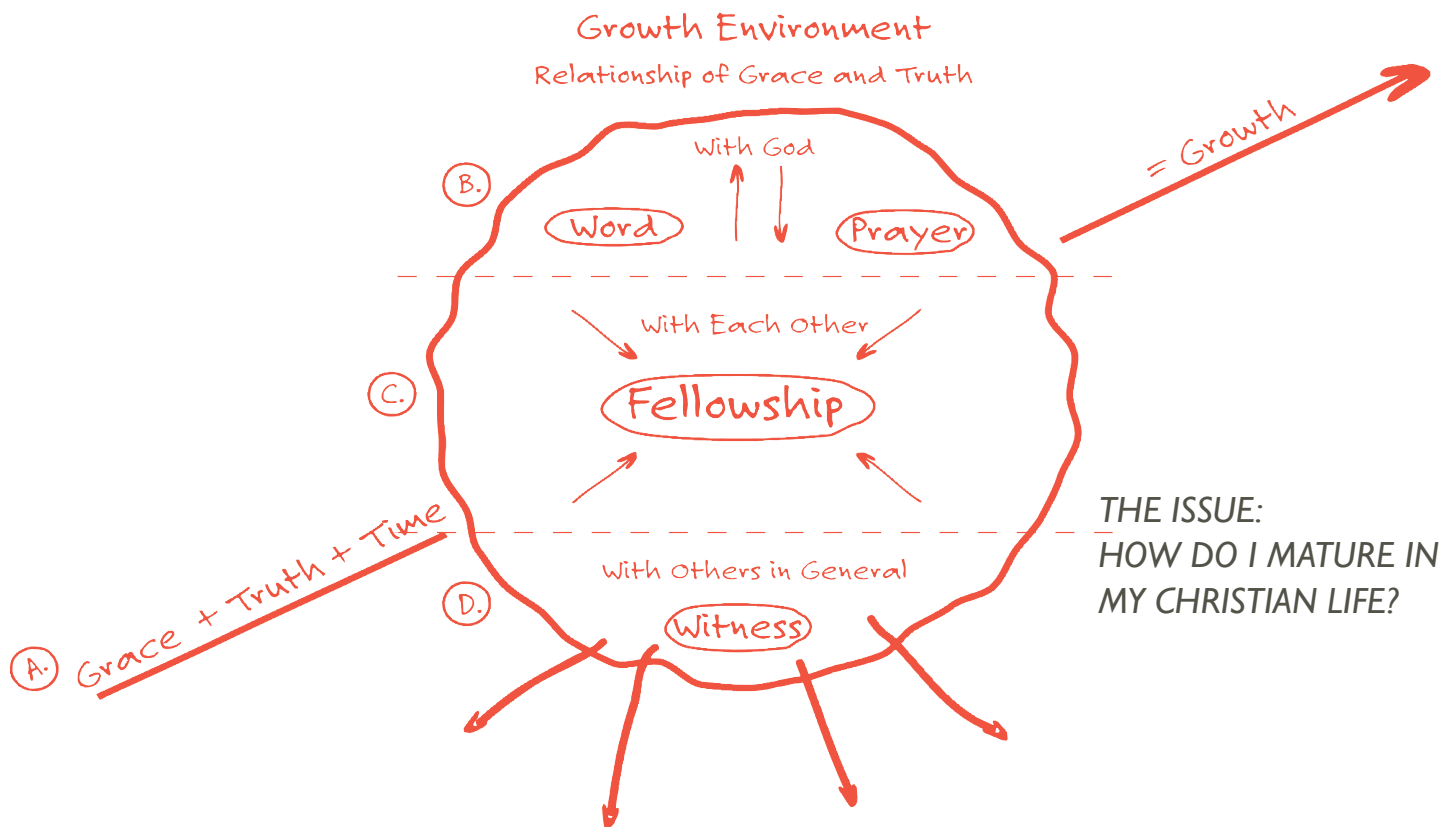
Imagine how exciting it would be if God used your life to influence others to become true believers in Christ.

4. EXAMINING THE SKETCH

Consider a seed that is planted in poor soil with little water or nutrients and little sun. How well would it grow?

What would happen if the same seed was placed in rich soil with plenty of nutrients, water and sun?

The difference in growth would be caused by the environment. The same is true for us spiritually.



A. The two primary ingredients that God uses to cause growth in our lives are grace and truth. Truth gives us the understanding we need to live the Christian life. Grace provides the acceptance and encouragement we need to keep on going. But growth doesn't happen all at once. It occurs as process over time. Thus, the formula for an ideal growth environment is:

$$\text{Grace} + \text{Truth} + \text{Time} = \text{Growth}$$

Like the new believers in Acts, we experience "Grace + Truth + Time" in the context of relationships.

- B.** The upward relationship is with God and is experienced through His Word and prayer.
- C.** The inward relationships are with each other (believers) and are experienced in fellowship.
- D.** The outward relationships are with those who do not believe in Christ. Our influence with them is through our witness for Christ.

5. TAKING STEPS

Develop an action plan for each of the relational characteristics of the growth environment.

UPWARD – Word and Prayer

Example: Take about 10 minutes each morning to continue reading the Gospel of John and talk to God about your day.

Your plan:

INWARD – Fellowship

Example: Go to church or to a Christian gathering.

Your plan:

OUTWARD – Witness

Example: Identify one or two people you care about and begin praying for them. Look for appropriate opportunities to tell them about the difference Christ is making in your life.

Your plan:

LIFE CONCEPTS

FROM UNCERTAINTY TO CONFIDENCE

FROM FEELINGS OF UNWORTHINESS TO FORGIVENESS

FROM BEING UNABLE TO EMPOWERED

FROM BEING UNPREPARED TO EQUIPPED

FROM BEING UNDEVELOPED TO MATURITY

THE BIBLE

PRESENTED BY AGAPESTUDENTI

▶ WHY?

WHY BOTHER READING A BOOK WRITTEN SO LONG AGO? WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL? THE BIBLE IS GOD'S COMMUNICATION TO HUMANITY-- TO YOU AND ME-- IN ORDER THAT WE CAN KNOW HIM. IT TELLS THE STORY OF GOD, THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE, INTERACTING WITH HIS CREATION THROUGHOUT HISTORY. AT THE CENTER OF THE STORY IS JESUS, GOD INCARNATE, WHO COMES TO RESCUE HIS CREATION FROM DESPAIR, BONDAGE, AND ETERNAL SUFFERING.

A **TESTAMENT** IS A WORD MEANING TESTIMONY, COVENANT, OR PROMISE. THEREFORE THIS IS GOD'S PROMISE TO US.

66
BOOKS MAKE UP THE BIBLE. THERE ARE 39 BOOKS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND 27 BOOKS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

- WHAT'S INSIDE?
- CREATION
 - SEPARATION
 - REPARATION
 - RESTORATION

1542
YEARS. THE BIBLE WAS WRITTEN FROM 1446 BC TO 96 AD.

HOW TO

WHERE DO I BEGIN?



READ ONE WHOLE BOOK (NOT THE WHOLE BIBLE) FIRST AS AN OVERVIEW, THEN STUDY SMALLER SECTIONS AT A TIME.



WHAT SHOULD I ASK?



HOW MUCH SHOULD I READ?

WHAT DID GOD SAY?
WHAT IS GOD SAYING?
HOW DOES GOD WANT ME TO RESPOND?

WE RECOMMEND A GOSPEL, LIKE THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

GOSPEL IS A WORD MEANING 'GOOD NEWS' - THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS.



ISN'T THE MODERN BIBLE DIFFERENT FROM THE ORIGINAL TEXT?

THE NEW TESTAMENT OF THE BIBLE IS THE BEST PRESERVED WORK OF ANCIENT LITERATURE IN HISTORY. DUE TO THE CONSISTENCY OF THE VAST NUMBER OF SURVIVING MANUSCRIPTS, SCHOLARS AGREE THAT WHAT WE HAVE TODAY IS NEARLY IDENTICAL TO WHAT WAS ORIGINALLY WRITTEN ALMOST 2,000 YEARS AGO.

40
AUTHORS. 35-40 AUTHORS WERE INSPIRED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT TO AUTHOR THE BIBLE.

DESPITE HAVING UP TO 40 DIFFERENT AUTHORS, THE OVERALL MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE IS CONSISTENT.

! WARNING

THE BIBLE IS NO ORDINARY BOOK! THE BIBLE IS "THE WORD OF GOD." THESE VERY WORDS CARRY GOD'S AUTHORITY AND SPEAK THE TRUTH ABOUT HIS CHARACTER, ACTIONS, AND PLANS FOR THE WORLD. JESUS SAID: "MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT COMES FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD" (MATT. 4:4). JESUS KNEW THAT NO FOOD CAN TRULY SATISFY US. OUR HEARTS AND SPIRITS ARE NOURISHED ONLY BY LISTENING TO AND KNOWING GOD THROUGH HIS WORD.





"BUT THE BIBLE ISN'T MAINLY ABOUT YOU AND WHAT YOU SHOULD BE DOING. IT'S ABOUT GOD AND WHAT HE HAS DONE." SALLY LLOYD JONES



WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

The Bible is a collection of books originally written in several languages. The Old Testament covers 2500 B.C. - 400 B.C., in the area of the world known as the Ancient Near East. **It starts with God creating all things and follows his historical and prophetic interactions with the Hebrew people.** The Hebrews are God's chosen people through whom he reveals who he is to the world.

The New Testament covers 1 A.D. - 90 A.D., during the reign of the Roman Empire in the Middle East. This section chronicles the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. There are four accounts of his life from eye witnesses, his disciples, and a historian. The other 22 books tell the beginnings of the first churches through historical accounts and letters written by Jesus's followers to groups of early Christians.

**WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE BIBLE ALREADY?
WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH IT?**

IS THE BIBLE ACCURATE?



One of the keys to verifying the accuracy of any ancient manuscript is to compare and cross-check the number of copies available today. Consider this: for some of Plato's writings there are only 7 early copies remaining. Homer's epic poem, The Iliad, is one of the best with 643 portions or copies remaining. **The New Testament, however, is the best preserved ancient manuscript in history. There are an unbelievable 5,366 portions, books or complete copies surviving from antiquity.**

Furthermore, the amount of time between the writing of the original document and the copy helps determine its accuracy. With Plato, an estimated 1,300 years elapsed between his death and the oldest manuscript copy available to us today. For the New Testament, however, the oldest surviving portions were written just 50-100 years after the original manuscripts. **Modern versions of the Bible are all translated from the oldest and best preserved manuscripts and so they are not merely "translations of translations."**

WHY DO YOU THINK IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE BIBLE IS ACCURATE AND RELIABLE?



HOW DO YOU READ IT?

Reading the Bible is an exciting journey. **It is likely to be the only book you ever read in which you are a part of the story.** Since the Bible wasn't originally written in our modern languages you first must choose a translation of the Bible, like the Nuova Riveduta 2006.

Choose a book of the Bible and read it all the way through as an overview. Then, break the book up into smaller pieces, like chapters or scenes. Study those more thoroughly, allowing your mind to reflect on what you are learning and ask questions about the text.

The Bible is the Word of God which means God wants to speak to you through it. Take time to pray and ask God to show you his character and care for you through his powerful words as you read.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT YOU ARE A PART OF THE STORY OF THE BIBLE?



INDUCTIVE 6-QUESTION BIBLE STUDY METHOD

1

Select a Passage

(Usually 3-10 verses, dealing with the same topic.)

- Why do you want to study this passage?

2

Observe the passage by asking questions

- Who is writing or speaking and to whom?
- What is the passage about?
- When does this take place?
- Where does this take place?
- Why does the author write what he does?
- What problems were the recipients facing? How does this passage address this?
- How does this passage fit in with the context? (What goes before and after?)

Additional Questions to Ask:

- What are the commands?
- What are the promises?
- What are the cause/effect relationships?
- What are the repeated words and ideas?
- What do I learn about God?
- What do I learn about Jesus?
- What do I learn about the Holy Spirit?
- What do I learn about myself (or mankind)?
- Write out any additional observations including contrasts, lists, comparisons, etc.

3

What is the “big idea” of the passage- what’s the theme?

- This can most readily be identified from the commands and the repeated words and ideas. Often there will be one command in the passage with several motivations. In one phrase, sum up the main thought of the passage.

4

Ask the natural question that arises from the “big idea.”

- This will usually be “how,” “why,” or “what.”

5

Answer the question you have raised from the passage.

Steps to interpreting the passage. Use as many of the following questions as you need, progressing downward.

- What are the meanings of the words?
- What does the immediate context suggest?
- What does the broader context suggest?
- What do cross-references suggest?
- What is the cultural meaning? (That is, What did it mean to those to whom it was originally addressed?)
- What do commentaries suggest?

6

Application

This is where you purpose to do what God has taught you in your time with Him. (Ref: James 1:21-25, Matthew 7:24-27) It is through applying the Word that God changes our lives. Application does not happen by osmosis but by intent. God enlightens us from the Word, we apply what we’ve learned with our wills, and the Holy Spirit empowers us to carry out these choices. It is usually best to concentrate on applying one principle at a time. The goal of all application is to glorify God by becoming more like Jesus.

2 Timothy 3:16: “All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for.”

Teaching. What did I learn?

Reproof. Where do I fall short? Why do I fall short?

Correction. What will I do about it?

Training in righteousness. How can I make this principle a consistent part of my life?

The Right Attitude

- There is no single formula for spending time with God. As in any relationship you will not always spend time with God in the same way.
- Activities may vary, and ought to, but the goal is to spend time communicating with God.
- Relationships take time. You need to plan regular times with God.

STUDY I - WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Andrea recently became a follower of Christ, but lately he's been having a hard time in his relationship with God. He feels grateful that God has forgiven his sins and wants to keep growing spiritually, but he feels like he's hit a wall. Does he have what it takes to be the kind, loving, unselfish person he knows God wants him to be? He's not so sure. Have you ever felt like Andrea does?

INTRO

Who is the Holy Spirit? Is he a *who*? Is he a *ghost*? When Jesus left the earth, he said that he had to leave so that the Holy Spirit could come (John 16:7). Why is this Holy Spirit so important? The Bible says the Holy Spirit is the power source to our spiritual life. It's like the electricity to a light bulb. Without electricity, the light bulb is still a light bulb, but it is powerless and useless. In the same way, without the Holy Spirit guiding their lives, Christians will have no power to live the kind of life God calls them to live. They will feel defeated and always kind of stuck. In this series we will learn who the Holy Spirit is and how He helps us live the Christian life. Let's first take a look at what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit.

WHAT DOES GOD SAY?

The Holy Spirit is a person, specifically the third person of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is not a vague, ethereal shadow, nor an impersonal force. He is a person equal in every way with the Father and the Son. All the divine attributes ascribed to the Father and the Son are equally ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

Read John 14:15-17 & 25-26. Why did the Holy Spirit come?

Read John 16:7-11. What did Jesus say about the Holy Spirit?

Let's discover who the Holy Spirit is in more detail. For each category below read the verses and write down what they say about the Holy Spirit.

1. Nature:
 - a. John 16:13
 - b. Romans 8:2

2. Function:
 - a. I Corinthians 3:16
 - b. Acts 1:8

3. Actions:
 - a. Romans 8:26
 - b. II Thessalonians 2:13

4. Attributes:
 - a. Genesis 1:1-2
 - b. Psalm 139:7
 - c. I Corinthians 2:10-11

HOW DO WE APPLY THIS TO OUR LIVES?

1. How would you describe the Holy Spirit to a Christian friend? To a non-Christian?
2. After doing today's study, what has changed in how you think about the Holy Spirit?

PRAYER

Spend a moment in prayer thanking God for some way He is working in your life and ask Him to help you apply one thing you have learned from the study this week.

The Holy Spirit was first introduced to us in Genesis and guides and accomplishes the work of God throughout the scriptures, ultimately being sent to fill and empower Christians after Pentecost. In the next study we will look at how the Holy Spirit helps Christians live their lives for God.

STUDY 2 - WHAT DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT DO?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Sara comes from a Christian family and has believed in Jesus for as long as she can remember. She loves God and participates in every activity of her local church. She listens to every sermon and studies her Bible on her own, but lately she has been feeling discouraged and guilty because she can't seem to live the "perfect" life that is expected of her. She tries hard to stop sinning and feels shame when she messes up. In what ways can you relate to Sara? If Sara came to you for advice, what would you tell her?

INTRO

In the last study we learned who the Holy Spirit is and why He came. But what does the Holy Spirit do for Christians today? The Bible teaches us how to live lives pleasing to God, but if we try to do so in our own strength we inevitably feel frustrated and guilty for not measuring up to God's standards. God knows this and gave us the Holy Spirit to help us. The Holy Spirit is the power source for the Christian. The moment you receive Christ, you are regenerated, indwelt, sealed, baptized, and filled with the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5, 1 Cor. 3:16, Eph. 1:13-14, 1 Cor. 12:13, Eph. 5:18). As a result, you have the potential to live a life of victory over sin and be a testimony of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Let's take a look at what the Bible says about how the Holy Spirit enables the Christian to live for Him.

WHAT DOES GOD SAY?

Read Romans 8:1-16. List out all of the things the Holy Spirit does for the believer.

Read Galatians 3:1-9. How are our own fleshly or human efforts viewed in this passage?

Read Galatians 5:16-26. Make two columns. On the right side, write out each fruit of the Spirit. On the left side, write the opposite of each fruit. When we are living by our own strength, we will see many of these negative fruits in our lives. When you notice one of these negative fruits showing up in your life, repent of it - confess it to God, ask for His forgiveness, trust that He forgives you and invite the Holy Spirit to fill you and produce the opposite, positive fruit.

HOW DO WE APPLY THIS TO OUR LIVES?

1. How would you explain the difference between the law of the flesh and the law of the Spirit in Romans 8 to a friend?
2. In what ways do you live according to the law of the flesh? How can you walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh?
3. Which fruits of the Holy Spirit are evident in your life? Which fruits are not as evident in your life and how could you grow in them?

PRAYER

Spend a moment in prayer thanking God for some way He is working in your life and ask Him to help you apply one thing you have learned from the study this week.

When we put our trust in Jesus, God gives us the Holy Spirit to help us live for Him. In the next study we will look at how we can daily be filled with the Holy Spirit.

STUDY 3 - HOW TO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Federico has been a Christian only for a short amount of time. He used to be really excited about his faith, but lately he doesn't feel much anymore. When he sins he feels so guilty that he doesn't pray for days. And when he finally does he feels distant from God. He's starting to question his faith. Have you ever felt this way? What would you say to Federico to encourage him?

INTRO

Christ's first disciples and followers were ordinary people – they were fishermen and tradesmen. They didn't have large amounts of wealth or status. Then, at Pentecost in Acts 2, something extraordinary happened – they were filled with the Holy Spirit and life was never the same. God used these men to start the early church and change the world, but they could only do it with power from the Holy Spirit.

The moment you put your trust in Christ as Lord you receive the Holy Spirit forever. The same Holy Spirit the disciples received with His life-changing power resides in you. You are dramatically changed; you are a new creation. But you may not always live like that. Tragically, many Christians go through life without ever experiencing the satisfied and fruitful life that Christ promised to all who trust Him. Maybe this describes you.

WHAT DOES GOD SAY?

A key part to a relationship with God is repentance. In the Gospels Jesus challenged people to turn from their sin and follow Him. The act of turning from our sin toward God is called repentance and can be understood through the simple analogy of breathing. We confess our sins to God (exhale), thank Him for his forgiveness, and invite God to fill us with the Holy Spirit (inhale) in order to have His power to turn from our sin.

Read Ephesians 5:15-18. Why do you think Paul relates drunkenness and being filled with the Spirit? The Ephesians to whom Paul was writing already received the Holy Spirit when they became Christians. Paul is not suggesting that they need to receive it again, but rather he commands them to be filled with the Spirit continually instead of being filled with other sinful things. This action of being filled continually by the Spirit is called spiritual breathing.

Spiritual breathing can be done in four steps:

1. EXHALE

Confess your sin the moment you become aware of it and thank Him for His forgiveness (1 John 1:9, Hebrews 10:1-25). This is like breathing out the bad air that could poison you. You can pray something like this: "God, I _____. That was sin. I'm sorry. Thank you for forgiving me."

2. INHALE

Next, ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit according to His command in Ephesians 5:18. You always have the Spirit within you but God wants to fill you with His power everyday. It's just too hard to live for God on your own strength. We all need the Holy Spirit's power to do it. You can pray something like this - "Please give me your power to not sin in that way again. Fill me with your Spirit and help me know that I am forgiven."

3. TRUST

Trust that God has forgiven your sins and is filling you with His Holy Spirit. We are filled with the Spirit by faith, enabling us to experience intimacy with God and enjoy all He has for us. "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him" (1 John 5:14-15).

4. REPEAT

We sin multiple times a day. Practice Spiritual Breathing whenever you recognize that you've sinned.

HOW DO WE APPLY THIS TO OUR LIVES?

1. What do you think would change in your life if you practiced Spiritual Breathing regularly?
2. What is true of you when you are filled with the Holy Spirit?
3. Take time now to do this exercise silently. How do you feel after?

It's important to remember that it is not our feelings but God's Word that is our authority. The Christian lives by faith and trust in God even when his or her feelings don't reflect that. If we are flying in a plane, we need to place our faith in the trustworthiness of the plane and pilot. Our feelings of confidence or fear don't affect the ability of the plane to transport us, but they do affect how much we enjoy the flight. In the same way, we don't depend on feelings or emotions to tell us if we're filled with the Spirit; we place our faith or trust in the trustworthiness of God and the promises of His Word. Whether or not we feel anything, we can be confident that God has forgiven us and is filling us with His Spirit if we ask Him.

PRAYER

Spend a moment in prayer thanking God for some way He is working in your life and ask Him to help you apply one thing you have learned from the study this week.

The Holy Spirit fills us to live radical, powerful lives for God. In the next study we will look at how God uses Spirit-filled people to advance His kingdom on earth.

STUDY 4 - TELLING OTHERS ABOUT JESUS THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Giulia and Francesca are classmates and regularly see each other around the city. During a break at their faculty by the coffee machine, Giulia mentioned that she is a Christian. Francesca laughed instinctively but quickly apologized. Since then Giulia has been afraid to talk about her faith with her classmates. Have you ever had an experience like Giulia's? What advice would you give her?

INTRO

All around you are friends and classmates struggling through life to find happiness and purpose. What would it be like if your friends, classmates, professors, and family members all knew Jesus? In Matthew 4:19 Jesus said to His disciples, "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men." One of the primary purposes for which you are filled with the Holy Spirit is to be a witness for Christ through the holy life that you live and the empowered words you speak. God wants to use you to share His life-changing message of salvation with those around you, and He promises to help you through the power of his Holy Spirit.

Consider carefully the last words Jesus told His disciples on the Mount of Olives moments before He ascended into heaven. Jesus had commissioned His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel and to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:16-19). But He had told them not to leave Jerusalem until they were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).

Jesus was suggesting to his disciples that although they had been with him for three years or more, it was not enough that they had heard him teach the multitudes and had seen him heal the sick and even raise the dead. They needed to be empowered with the Holy Spirit in order to be effective and fruitful as his witnesses throughout the world.

WHAT DOES GOD SAY?

Read John 15: 26-27.

- How does this passage describe the Holy Spirit?
- Who will "testify" and what does that mean?

Jesus told his disciples in Acts 1:8 "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." The rest of the book of Acts tells the story of the Holy Spirit empowering the disciples to tell the good news of Jesus and starting the early Church.

Read Acts 4: 1-22

- What can we learn about the Holy Spirit from this story?
- How do the Holy Spirit and Peter testify about Jesus?
- Peter was sharing the message about Jesus in a way that personally related to the leaders of Jerusalem. How would you share about Jesus in a way that personally relates to a classmate or friend?

Sometimes our faith can get us in difficult situations. We may not always know exactly what to say to our friends or professors. Often our fears prevent us from saying anything at all. When you feel afraid, practice Spiritual Breathing - confess your fear to God and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter said "As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." The Holy Spirit will help you share with others about what you have seen, heard, and experienced with God.

HOW DO WE APPLY THIS TO OUR LIVES?

- What reason do we have to share the message of Jesus with others?
- What have you "seen and heard" about Jesus that you would want to share with others?
- How do you think differently about the Holy Spirit after these studies? What would you want to communicate to a friend about the Holy Spirit?

PRAYER

Spend a moment in prayer thanking God for some way He is working in your life and ask Him to help you apply one thing you have learned from the study this week.

Jesus said in Luke 10:2 that "the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few." God has given the Holy Spirit to empower us to be witnesses for Christ and join in His mission as laborers for the harvest. God has strategically placed you in your family, faculty, and friend groups to be a testimony for Him. Write out the names of 5 friends below and ask God to give you opportunities this week to talk about your faith with them. Expect God to be at work in their lives and search for how He is answering your prayers.