

The Spiritual Continuum

By John Edmiston



But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will in no way be able to fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

(Galatians 5:16, literal Greek translation)

Copyright & Permissions

We want you to freely use The Spiritual Continuum in your ministry so here are the guidelines and permissions

This book is © copyright John Edmiston, 2017 and is under the following Creative Commons license which means you are *free to share the work and make copies and distribute it for non-profit Christian ministry purposes* however:

1. Please acknowledge my name, John Edmiston, as the author
2. Do not sell or use this book for commercial purposes in any way.
3. Any derivative works (such as translations) must also be under the Creative Commons license and may not be sold in any way.



To clarify:

Yes, you may print out as many copies as you wish, you may send email copies to your friends, you may put it on your ministry website, and you may freely use it for study purposes in your church, bible study or bible college. You may charge a small amount for the cost of printing and reproduction but you may not commercially publish the work with a publisher, either alone or as part of a larger collection of works.

Yes, you have permission to accurately translate The Spiritual Continuum into your language and distribute it as above (providing that you do not change the doctrine).

You may also acknowledge yourself as the translator however John Edmiston must be acknowledged as the original author. Please notify us of any translation efforts as we would really like to find out how this work is helping the people of God. Also, this is important because in larger languages two different groups might be trying to translate the book at the same time.

John Edmiston johned@cybermissions.org Skype ID: johnedmiston
 (CEO - Cybermissions) www.globalchristians.org www.cybermission.org

How To Use *The Spiritual Continuum* In Ministry

This book is designed both as a book that can be easily read by an individual, and as a teaching manual that can be used in churches and in bible study groups. Theologically, it is suitable for Bible-believing, born-again, Spirit-filled Christians from a wide range of denominations and does not push any particular church or organizational perspective. No payment is required.

It is designed for 18-35 year olds in a discipleship program, preferably with a mentor. It is meant to be read first then discussed later, so it is fairly concise.

- A slightly larger font is employed so that it will be easy to read on mobile devices or in less than perfect lighting.
- There are wide margins so that the pages may be put in a ring binder and given out to students.
- There is some space at the bottom of each page so that students can make their own notes as they go along.
- There are study and discussion questions and practical exercises and “how to” material so that students can put the teachings into practice.
- There is a Teacher and Facilitators Guide.

This book is designed for digital distribution and will be available in a wide range of digital formats such as PDF, epub, mobi and so on. Feel free to share it around to your friends.

You may print it out for study purposes in small groups, conferences and classroom situations.

There will be a free web page to help you teach the book and get the most from it in your ministry at www.globalchristians.org/sc/ and we also hope to have it as a free email course that students can sign-up for.

Above all *The Spiritual Continuum* is designed to be put into practice in your daily life!

Introduction – What Is The Spiritual Continuum?

The new Christian needs to become a mature Christian, and this is a long process of refinement. This book is about understanding the path to spiritual growth and the journey toward Christian maturity until the believer is: perfected in love, mature in faith, and fully in the image of God's beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

The Christian life is much, much more than “getting saved”, then waiting around on earth, then going to Heaven. There is a lot of growing up to do as well! Here are some bible passages about Christian maturity:

Romans 8:29 *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*

Ephesians 4:13-15 *..until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,*

Philippians 1:28 *Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.*

Philippians 4:12 *Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.*

I have called this short book The Spiritual Continuum. Here is a dictionary definition of “continuum”: *A continuous sequence in which adjacent elements are not perceptibly different from each other, although the extremes are quite distinct.* This book is about the entire spectrum of the Christian life!

There is a huge difference between the immature, carnal or fleshly Christian and the mature Christian saint, so the extremes are quite clear-cut. However, the believer's daily progress seems to be in small steps. The Christian life is a long series of small steps. It is continuous discipleship. Or, as someone has said, “a long obedience in the same direction”. The saint is just someone who has diligently taken a lot more of these “tiny steps” and so has travelled much farther along the Christian path.

This book teaches just eight important steps along this spiritual continuum. Which are:

1. Be born again; be born of the Spirit.
2. Set your mind on the things of the Spirit in a decisive way.
3. Be filled with the Spirit and with the Word and receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit
4. Worship in the Spirit, with psalms, hymns, spiritual songs and a heavenly language.
5. Walk in the Spirit; and you will not be able to fulfill the lusts of the flesh.
6. Be led by the Spirit into the will of God and into the adventures of faith

7. Be taught of the Spirit whenever you encounter troubles, difficulties and crises of faith.
8. Love in the Spirit and thus fulfill the law of Christ and all the commandments.

You normally do these practices in order. The first step is to be born-again by placing your faith in Jesus Christ, because you simply cannot live the Spirit-filled life if you are not born-again.

Once you are born-again you have to decide that the Holy Spirit will now be in charge of your thought-life; and make a firm decision to set your mind on the Spirit and on things above. Once you do this, it will be very easy for you to be filled with God's Spirit and God's Word.

Once you are filled with the Spirit and the Word you will have supernatural joy, which will lead you to willingly and freely worship Jesus in the Spirit, singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. As you do this you may find the wonderful fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, faithfulness etc) rising up within you and changing the very nature of your soul to be more like Jesus.

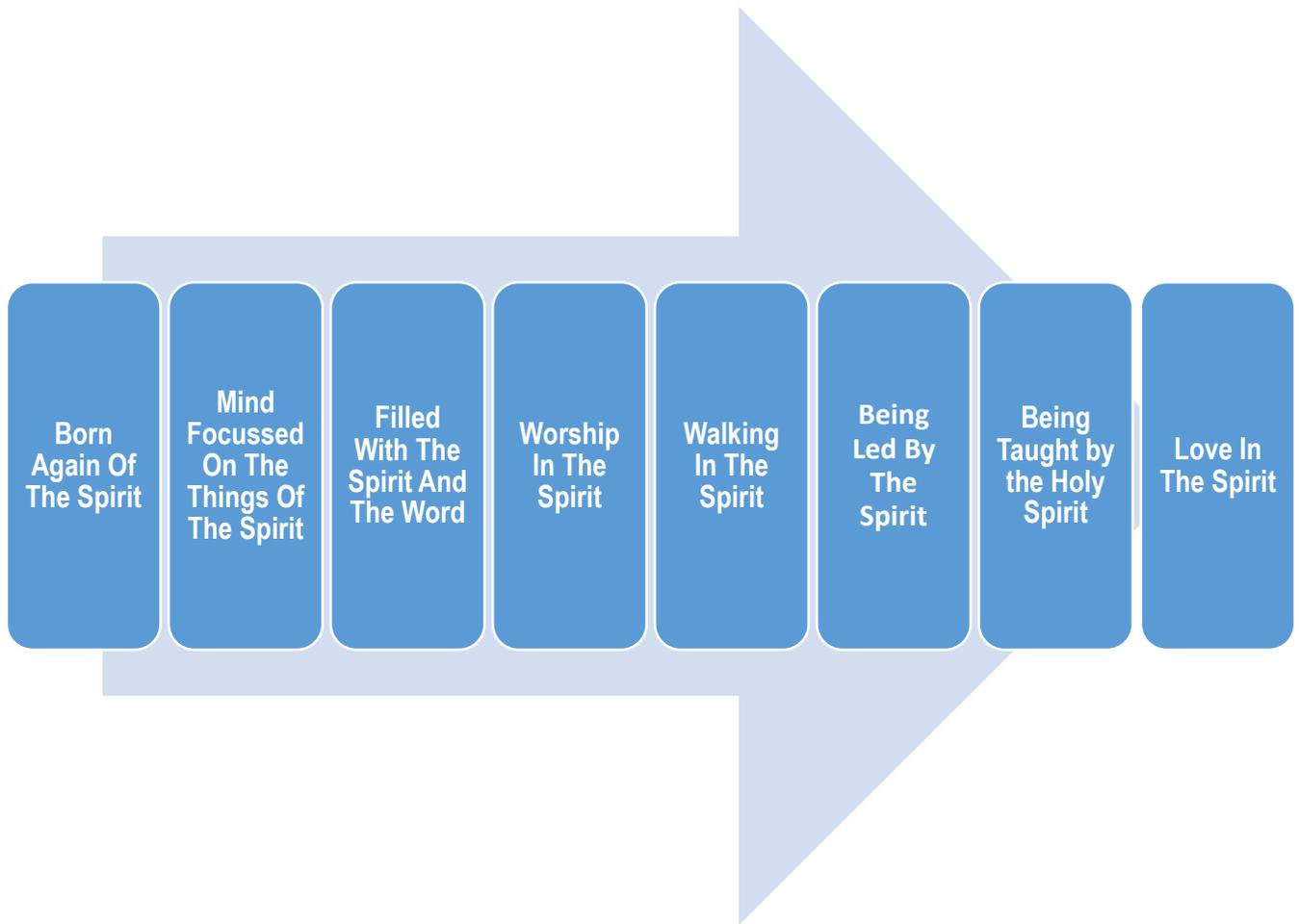
As the Holy Spirit fills your life you will have a strong impulse to carry out God's will, which is walking in the Spirit. As you do this, you will live a Christian lifestyle and make wise Christian decisions out of obedience to your heavenly Father. Once you are walking, then you can be led somewhere! At this point God will lead you and show you the way. The Spirit will lead you into exciting adventures of life and faith to the glory of God!

God's adventures sometimes take us into mystifying circumstances and into crises of faith where we cry out to God for a solution. It is at these times that the Lord will show up as our divine Teacher and we will be taught of the Spirit. We will learn a lot more about this later.

The main commandment of God is "love one another", and we cannot do this except by the power of the Holy Spirit. He will teach us how to love others with the love that is from God.

Some of these stages almost slip into each other which is why I have called the process a continuum; for instance, being filled with the Spirit easily slides into worshipping in the Spirit, and being led by the Spirit easily slides into being taught of the Spirit. So please do not get bogged down in hair-splitting definitions of each stage, which is totally beside the point.

The usefulness of these discrete stages is in helping you to know where you are at spiritually and what you need to do next in order to make spiritual progress. They also help you to understand the process as a whole and to be confident that God is at work in you in a very systematic and faithful way that you can easily cooperate with by faith.



The Spiritual Continuum

Stage One: Being Born Of The Spirit

Most of you who are reading this book are probably already born-again, and you might be tempted to skip this short chapter. Please not do that because you will learn a great deal about your new nature and what it means to be a totally new creation in Christ Jesus. This teaching will be a solid foundation for everything else that you learn in the rest of this book.

The following conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus (in the gospel of John) lays out some amazing truths about what it means to be born-again:

(John3:1) *Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. (3:2) This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." (3:3) Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

Jesus states, quite firmly, that you cannot even start on the spiritual life ("enter the Kingdom of God") until you are born-again. The old life is not sufficient. You need a new start and a new life. This is not just for prisoners and drug-addicts, everyone needs to be born-again, even Nicodemus who was a respectable leader in Israel.

(3:4) *Nicodemus 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?" (3:5) Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (3:6) That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."*

Nicodemus is puzzled and interprets Jesus' statement as requiring another natural birth where he would have to crawl back into the womb of his mother and go through the birthing process all over again. Jesus then explains that it is not a new physical birth that is required but a new spiritual life, one that is not from the flesh, but rather is from the Spirit.

Verse 6 is all-important: *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

Nicodemus was a "teacher of all Israel" (v. 10) and yet all his Torah (Jewish Bible) knowledge was just "flesh", which is just another term for human effort centered around our own ego. There was absolutely no life in the religion of Nicodemus. Nicodemus could go to the Temple, read the Bible, teach the Bible, and even obey the Bible and yet be spiritually dead.

Nicodemus would say that he certainly believed in God. In fact, believing in God was probably at the very center of his existence! However, it was still "of the flesh" as there was no living connection to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Being born-again is not just a feeling; it is the connection of an empty human being to the love of Almighty God. And Nicodemus was empty! He was striving hard, but he was an empty shell. Nicodemus needed to be completely filled with God!

Jesus introduces us to the two modes of being which He calls “flesh” and “spirit”. When we are in the flesh we are doing it all ourselves, we are acting out of our own sense of who we are, we are based in the human ego, and we lack true power from God. The flesh produces a temporary result that soon fades away. There is no eternal result, no deep spiritual transformation, we put in a lot of effort but soon end up right back where we started.

On the other hand, spirit gives birth to spirit, eternity gives birth to eternity, and God gives birth to His children! When we are “of the Spirit”, we naturally inherit the divine nature. The spiritual life is not forced. Love is not forced. Joy is not forced. All good things arise out of the new nature as part of the process of growing up in Christ.

(John 3:7,8) *Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows 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 person “born of the Spirit” is as unpredictable as the wind, they are moved by Heaven and not by this world and they have a new life in them that is heavenly and from above. You cannot become born-again by scholarship or by doing good deeds. You become born-again by believing in Jesus Christ (John 3:16) and this makes you an entirely new creation:

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

This new creation still has to live (for now) in the midst of the old creation which creates a lot of conflict: **Galatians 4:29** *But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now.*

The people of the flesh, the people of this world, do not understand born-again people and are sometimes hostile or arrogant toward them.

The apostle Peter also tells us a few things about what it means to be born-again:

1 Peter 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

1 Peter 1:23 *since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;*

1 Peter 2:1-3 *So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. 2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

So, we are born-again to a living hope through the living and abiding word of God which we are to desire like milk so that we may grow up into salvation! (Peter is obviously writing to fairly new Christians here). Also notice that the seed is imperishable (the Word of God) which means that being born-again is not some transient thing, like a spiritual fad. It is a whole new change of our nature based on powerful, eternal and imperishable spiritual principles.

Therefore, once you are born-again you are an imperishable new creation with a whole lot of growing up to do (which is what the rest of this book is about). The apostle Peter says that new Christians are “newborn infants” in spiritual matters even if they are as successful and as powerful as Nicodemus.

So being born-again means that we start living by Heaven and by the Spirit instead of by the world, the flesh or the Devil.

It also means that we do not live like the people in the Old Testament who were under the Law. Certainly, we need to be holy and righteous, but the way we go about doing that is now entirely different! We are not doing it by our own strength, but via the Spirit and this small book will show you how to do that and how to live a joyful and holy life.

Instead of always trying and failing to live up the rules in the Bible, we fulfill the Scriptures by living them out in our lives by the power of Jesus Christ who comes to dwell in us!

Galatians 2:19-21 *For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.*

These verses from Galatians tell us that:

- a) Righteousness is not through obeying the Law of Moses in the Old Testament
- b) We are crucified to the old spiritual life through Christ
- c) We now live out our spiritual lives by faith through the power of Christ in us.

The new person does not live by the old law. We do not live “by the letter” rather we live “by the Spirit”. Not word for word or line by line, but out of a completely new life principle that God creates within us:

2 Corinthians 3:5,6 *Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

Romans 7:6 *But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.*

We serve in the new way of the Spirit! We are not rule-keepers, rather we are followers of the Spirit Who gives us life. Nicodemus obeyed the law, but Nicodemus did not have spiritual life because Nicodemus was not born-again!

Once we have spiritual life, once we are new creations, once we have Christ in us we then just follow the seven next steps of the spiritual life which are: set your mind on the Spirit, be filled with the Spirit, worship in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, be led by the Spirit, be taught by the Spirit and finally fervently love one another in the Spirit.

So, instead of follow this rule then that rule and so on and so forth we just follow God. We follow God by practicing the seven steps of the spiritual life (after the basic essential step of being born-again).

It is a change from a static, hard-and-fast set of rules to a compelling, wise, spiritual lifestyle where Christ in us brings us into a whole new realm of living and being. The old way, the way of rules, produces a person who conforms. The new way, the way of the Spirit produces a person who is alive and who is full of love. The person who is full of love fulfills the inner spiritual intent of all the old rules along the way and has an extra dimension of eternal life.

Romans 12:8-10 *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

Thus, the born-again person matures into a Christ-like person who is full of love. This love fulfills the law and achieves all righteousness. The born-again person does not mature by following rules. The new creation matures through God being at work inside of them and by following the spiritual disciplines in the New Testament such as setting their mind on the Spirit and not upon the flesh – which leads us to the next chapter.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you need to be born-again?
2. Describe what occurs when someone is born-again, in as much detail as possible.
3. How does the born-again Christian arrive at personal maturity?
4. What does it mean to be a New Creation?

Stage Two - Setting Your Mind Upon The Spirit

Romans 8:4-8 *in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

After a Christian is born-again the next step is for the new believer to set his/her mind upon the things of the Spirit.

The mind set on the flesh is death and cannot please God. The mind set on the flesh is very self-centered and is always fussing and fretting, fuming, and getting angry, fighting and being ego-centric. The mind set on the flesh is all about self-gratification and so cannot fulfill the royal law of love.

The flesh is the old self-centered life that avoids the Cross. The flesh always opposes God (Galatians 5:16-18) and does not submit to God's law. It is deeply rebellious and uses various tricks such as rationalization to get its own way.

We need to direct our mind onto the Spirit instead. When we do that the energies of God flow into us. We have life and peace. We do this by setting our minds firmly on the things of the Spirit. We make an active choice about what we will think about! Instead of junk TV, we read the Bible and have a daily devotional. Instead of gangster rap music, we listen to good pleasant uplifting music and Christian music. We start thinking about how to help others, how to serve at church and about spiritual questions. We attend prayer meetings, and we decide to pray each day.

This "setting our mind on the Spirit" starts out as a series of firm and definite choices and then eventually becomes our habitual lifestyle. At first, we have to go to war against distractions and temptations and it seems hard. Our thoughts wander, or maybe we spend too much time thinking about negative things such as insults, hardships and inconveniences.

We have to consciously replace our "stinking thinking" with higher and better thinking, with thoughts of gratitude, love, peace and kindness. This is known as the renewal of the mind.

Romans 12:1-1 *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Our minds are not to be conformed to this world and filled with greed, selfish ambition, resentment, pride and lust. Rather we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we can know the will of God.

Adam was created with a perfect mind. However, after he sinned, Adam's human mind became unwise, and foolish and unable to know God properly. Our minds then came to love sin and selfishness and getting our own way. We went from having a God-centered mind to having a self-centered mind!

It is like one of those children's pegboards with the shapes in it and holes for the square, the triangle, the circle, the oblong and so on. Our mind is like the pegboard and the shapes are godly ideas such as love, truth and righteousness. When Adam fell the pegboard (our mind) became twisted and now the shapes (good thoughts) do not fit any more and twisted thoughts (such as greed) enter our minds very readily.

We need to renew our minds daily by setting them on the Spirit instead of the flesh. When we do this, slowly but surely, our minds will end up being conformed to the mind of Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:14- 16 *The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. 15 The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. 16 "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.*

In the verses above we see that there is a huge difference between the natural man, who cannot understand the things of God, and the spiritual man who possesses the mind of Christ. Why do unbelievers struggle to read the Bible? Because they are "natural" and not born-again. They do not yet have the Holy Spirit and the mind of Christ. Once people are born-again the Bible becomes interesting and even easy to read.

When we are born-again we receive a spiritual mind and can start to understand the things of God. However we have to decide to use our spiritual mind, and we need to strengthen our spiritual mind by daily setting it on the things of the Spirit.

Ephesians 4:23 *and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

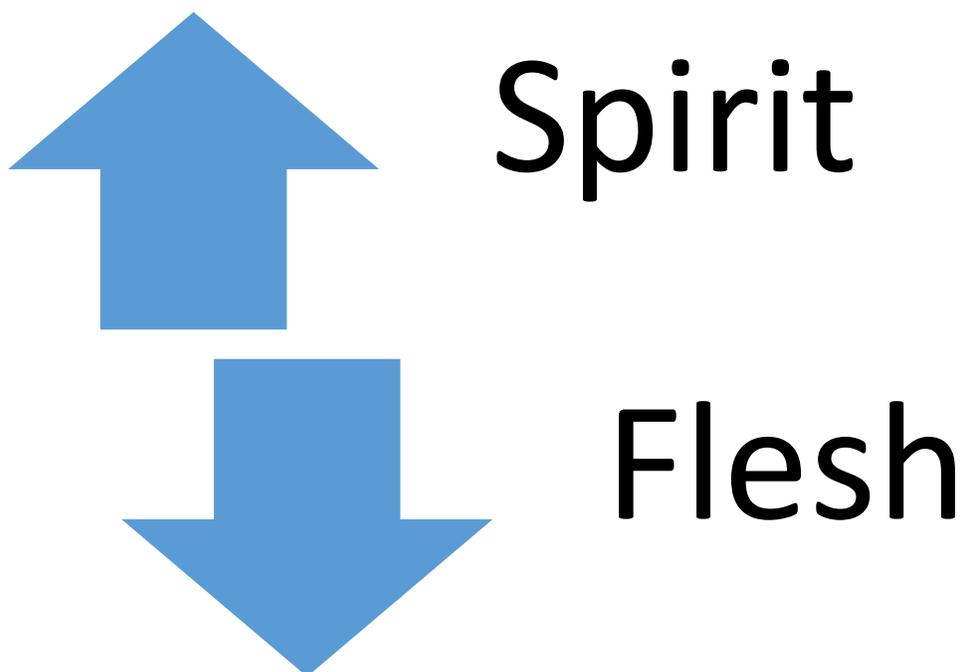
The above verse from Ephesians instructs us to be renewed in the spirit of our minds. The mind and the spirit are intimately connected. The mind is like a doorway to the Spirit. When we open the door to the flesh, the flesh comes in. When we open the door to the Spirit, then the Holy Spirit comes in.

Ephesians goes on to say, “put on the new self”. We have a nasty old self, and a loving new self. The new self is the new creation and is created after the likeness of God. Your new self is holy and good. However, you have to “put it on” like a suit of clothes.

When you get up in the morning, you need to set your mind on the things of the Spirit and decide to put on your new self, the Christian self, the self that is in the likeness of God. You have to discipline yourself to do this because your lazy undisciplined self will not do it for you! Remember you are a work in progress.

In every area of life, what you focus on determines the outcome. If you focus on anger, you will remain angry. If you focus on kindness, you will become kind. If you focus on money you will become greedy, if you focus on your work you will become diligent, and if you focus on God’s will you will become holy.

Life and peace come from a mind focused on the Spirit. Conflict and trouble come from a mind focused on the flesh. Every moment of every day you get to make this choice.



Suppose you are offended. You have two choices. You can focus on the flesh and the offense and become angry, resentful, vengeful and bitter. Or, you can focus on God, commit the matter to Him, forgive it and move on wisely. Then you will have life and peace.

If you are to make any progress in the spiritual life, you have to master the art of setting your mind on the Spirit because the mind set on the flesh simply cannot please God. This is a very basic and fundamental discipline.

One of the main things that takes our mind from spiritual things is a perception of threat. If we think we are going to starve, or be beaten or killed or not have food or shelter or be socially humiliated then we go into the well-known negative “fight-or-flight” mode which is counter-productive to rational thought.

In this mode, we focus totally on the problem or threat and tend to exclude the calmer, good, wise and creative solutions. The wisdom of the spiritual world is thrown out in a mad rush to visceral self-preservation.

Here is Jesus’ wise admonition on such things:

Matthew 6:25-34 *“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? 28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34 “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*

Jesus tells us where to put our minds when He exhorts us to “seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness”. As our minds focus on the Kingdom, God mysteriously provides. Our Heavenly Father knows what we need and takes care of the anxiety and threat of daily existence.

As our mind/spirit connects with Heaven, then Heaven connects back to us in terms of daily provision. Fear does not connect with Heaven. It is on entirely the wrong wavelength. Prayer, faith and a mind set on God, do connect with God and do get the answers and the creative wisdom that we require in order to cope with daily life.

The apostle Paul sets out his version of this advice in his brief epistle to the Philippians:

Philippians 4: 6-9 *...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true,*

whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

This well-known passage tells us much about the daily practice of setting our minds upon the Spirit so that we can receive life and peace:

1. Refuse anxiety and move toward prayer
2. Move into prayer and supplication
3. Enter into thanksgiving that God is on your side.
4. God's peace will enter the mind focused on Him
5. The mind set on Him should think pure and noble and praiseworthy thoughts
6. Practice the above as a routine and the God of peace will be with you.

The key thing is to realize that you need to quickly move from anxiety to prayer. Anxiety solves nothing. Prayer is at least a start toward a solution. In prayer, we often get an idea that provides the solution and in prayer we find peace and once we find peace then we are aligned with the resources of Heaven. Move from focusing on the problem, to focusing on the solution.

Paul takes this one step further in the book of Colossians where he gets quite theological about the business of where we set our minds:

Colossians 3:1-4 *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

Our spiritual life is “up there” with Christ and not “down here” with the world. Your true self is hidden with Christ in God. Sure, we have to take care of life's practical details, but those details are not our eternal life. If, like biblical Martha, we end up fretting and fussing so much that we miss out on Jesus, then we need to refocus.

The glory of God appears in us when we have our minds set on Him! Then His life becomes our life, and His glory becomes our glory. Not the fading glory of the world, but the eternal glory of Christ Jesus. So, we need to set our minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth!

The mind is the key to everything else; it is the door to Heaven when it is focused on the Spirit, or the door to Hell when it is focused on the flesh. The mind is the spiritual key to the spiritual life. However, it often is unruly and fallen. You need to renew your mind (see Romans 12 earlier) and you need to consciously focus your mind. You need to calmly walk away from anxiety. You have to deliberately walk into prayer. You need to set your mind on things above.

How does a born-again Christian set their mind on the things of the Spirit? It is a bit like budgeting. The key to budgeting is to become aware of where your money is actually going. Likewise, the key to setting your mind on the Spirit is to know what your mind is getting set on. Get pencil and paper, and for a few hours go about and try to notice what your mind is thinking:

- A. Profitable thoughts – set on the Spirit, things above, loving thoughts, prayer
- B. Necessary thoughts – work, tasks, getting things done, functional thinking
- C. Frantic thoughts – hurry, anxiety, fretting, worrying, daydreaming, self-centered thinking
- D. Toxic thoughts – lust, rage, bitterness, revenge, scheming manipulation, egotism

Do not feel guilty; just observe your patterns of thought like an anthropologist observing a tribe in the jungle. Once you become aware of your patterns of thought then try to improve the balance.

Take your frantic thoughts to prayer. Repent of your selfish and toxic thoughts. Read your bible a bit more. Put on some edifying music. Get into a good spiritual conversation at least once a week with friends you can trust in a life group, home group or bible study. And, of course go to church and also worship at home. Using a daily devotional book can help you to have some quality time focused on spiritual things. And instead of listening to that politician who makes your blood boil, switch over to having a loving conversation with your children.



Other suggestions to turn your “stinking thinking” into godly thinking are:

1. Work on positive uplifting things, fill your time with them
2. Hang around up-beat people of faith and love so you will “catch the positive vibes”
3. Have a list of good positive things that you want to do and focus on that list
4. Do not keep going over and over stressful situations in your head, it does not work
5. Check your perception of threat – is it actually true. Calm down.
6. Focus on the good in people
7. Focus on the good in each day
8. Develop an attitude of gratitude
9. Stay simple in life and give stuff away
10. Live one day at a time
11. Praise God regularly even for small things
12. Praise people when you catch them doing something right
13. Keep edifying Scriptures near your computer and your mirror
14. Don’t think people are being mean when they are just being careless
15. Stop seeing life as a ruthless competition
16. Look for the solution in every problem
17. View difficulties as challenges you can solve with God’s help
18. It’s not all about the money. Many good things are free.
19. Rejoice in your relationships.
20. Hold onto the promises of God
21. Pray regularly and have a daily quiet time
22. See how many times a day you can be an encouragement and a blessing.
23. Learn to see joyful abundance everywhere.
24. Get outside into God’s creation and be glad.
25. Decide to be joyful.

Your mind will wander from time to time. Just bring it back to the positive! Your crazy thoughts will try to run your life but they are just like rebellious children and you can eventually get them back into line. Be confident that you will slowly but win the game of setting your mind upon the things of the Spirit!

Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between a Christian setting their mind on the Spirit and a Christian setting their minds on the flesh?
2. How do we set our mind on the things of the Spirit?
3. What is the role of prayer and thanksgiving in setting our mind on the Spirit?
4. What kind of things should a Christian be thinking about?

Stage Three – Being Filled With the Spirit and the Word

Once your mind is fixed on the Spirit, then the next logical step is to be filled with the Spirit. Fixing the mind on the Spirit is like turning on the power switch, but you have to let the power flow into you through the Spirit and the Word.

In this chapter, we will look at three closely related practical concepts:

1. The baptism in the Holy Spirit, which is normally a one-time experience that endues us with spiritual gifts and with power to serve God as His witness.
2. The infilling of the Spirit – which is daily and continuous work of the Spirit within us to produce wisdom, holiness and the fruit of the Spirit in our Christian character.
3. Letting the Word of God dwell richly in us – which is closely parallel to the filling of the Holy Spirit and produces a life founded on the promises and prophecies of Scripture and the commandments of Jesus Christ and which has the result of effectiveness in prayer and teaching.

Baptism - Spirit UPON

Filling - Spirit WITHIN

Word - Spirit ACTIVE & SHARP

THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Mark 1:8 *I indeed have baptized you in water, but He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit.*

Matthew 3:11-12 *I indeed baptize you with water to repentance. But He who comes after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire;*

Here John the Baptist is telling us that the baptism Jesus would administer would be different in nature and in kind from his baptism. John's baptism was 'with water unto repentance' while Jesus would be the one who would baptize with 'the Holy Spirit and fire'. Jesus Himself makes the difference plain at His Ascension:

Acts 1:4-5 *And having met with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to await the promise of the Father which you heard from Me. (5) For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days from now.*

A few verses later Jesus states the effect of this baptism in the Holy Spirit:

Acts 1:8 *But you shall receive power, the Holy Spirit coming upon you. And you shall be witnesses to Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

Here we see that the baptism in the Holy Spirit in verse 5 is identical with 'the Holy Spirit coming upon you' in verse 8. This will prove a key observation later as we examine the difference between the Holy Spirit 'in' the believer and the Holy Spirit 'upon' us.

Now the disciples had already received the Holy Spirit within them after the resurrection:

John 20:22 *When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."*

Therefore, the Holy Spirit coming upon them, to baptize them in power was another blessing in addition to the Holy Spirit within them, and they were to wait for this additional power in Jerusalem.

First, the distinction between baptism in water and baptism in the Holy Spirit:

Acts 8:14-17 *Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. (15) They went down and prayed for them to receive the Holy Spirit. (16) Before this he had not come on any of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (17) Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.*

Up to the arrival of the apostles the Holy Spirit had not 'come upon' (baptized) any of them (v.16). The Samaritans who had accepted the gospel (v.14) had only been baptized in the name of Jesus (that is in water) (v.16). The Samaritans had believed and were baptized in water the name of Jesus but they were still missing something! So the apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to them and they laid hands on the Samaritans and they received the Holy Spirit.

When Peter preaches the gospel at the house of the Gentile centurion Ananias things happen in the opposite order; with the baptism in the Holy Spirit coming first:

Acts 10:44-48 *While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all the people who were listening to his message. (45) Then the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too. (46) For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, (47) "No one can stop us from using water to baptize these people who have received the Holy Spirit in the same way that we did, can he?" (48) So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay for several days.*

The Holy Spirit falls upon them (v.44), they speak in tongues and praise God (v.46), and all the Jewish believers present acknowledge that the Gentiles had received the 'gift of the Holy Spirit' (v.45, 47). The Gentiles have already been baptized in the Spirit and Peter recognizes this and uses water (v.47) to baptize them 'in the name of Jesus Christ' (v.48).

So we see three separate related things: believing in Jesus, being baptized in water in Jesus' name, and having the Holy Spirit come upon the believer in power.

A possible analogy is that it is similar to a marriage where:

Falling in love = Conversion

The marriage ceremony = Baptism in water

and Intimacy = the Holy Spirit coming upon us, power to witness and the ability to produce spiritual children).

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a baptism in the love of God where we praise and glorify His Name and receive the power to witness to Him among the nations of the world. Thus, it is often accompanied by the verbal spiritual gifts such as tongues and prophecy.

Before I finish this section I would like to clear up any alarm and confusion and also outline the difference between the Holy Spirit 'in' the believer (which happens at conversion) and the Holy Spirit 'upon' us (which may be a subsequent event).

The Holy Spirit **within** us is the internal work of God in our lives and is received at conversion. It is tied to our new Christian nature. The Holy Spirit within us produces the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience as well as imparting wisdom, revelation and a spirit of excellence and holiness. This is NOT a second experience. If you truly are a believer then you must have the Holy Spirit within you.

The Holy Spirit **upon** us is the external anointing for works of power, witness and ministry (Acts 1:8). It is the enabling work of God that imparts boldness (Acts 4:31) and spiritual gifts as the Holy Spirit Himself decides (1 Corinthians 12:1-11).

Of course, these are not entirely separate! They meet in the person of the Holy Spirit. The 'hinge' that connects the Holy Spirit within us and the Holy Spirit upon us, is the filling of the Holy Spirit. This is where an external outpouring of the Holy Spirit also enters into us and fills us:

Acts 4:31 *When they had prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken, and all of them **were filled** with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.*

Ephesians 5:18-20 *Stop getting drunk with wine, which leads to wild living, but **keep on being filled** with the Spirit. (19) Then you will recite to one another psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. You will sing and make music to the Lord with your hearts. (20) You will always give thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The Holy Spirit *within us* is primary and is essential for salvation. We need a new nature, holiness, love and the fruit of the Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit *upon us*, is essential for courage, joy and power in ministry. Together they join up as the daily *filling* with the Holy Spirit and the abundant Christian life.

So far we have seen that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is identical with the Holy Spirit coming upon a Christian (Acts 1:5,8) so that they are immersed in God and have power and boldness in ministry being equipped with spiritual gifts for the edification of the body of Christ.

We also saw there is a 3-part process that is found in the book of Acts:

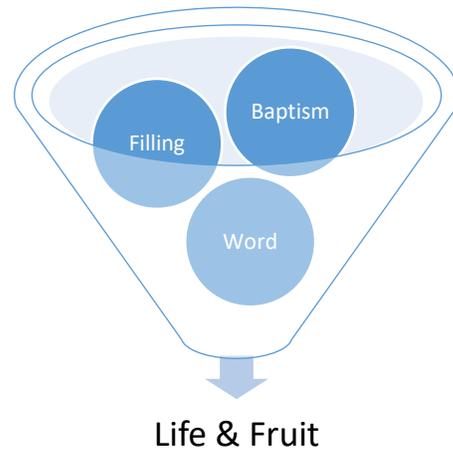
- a) Believing in the gospel and having the Holy Spirit placed within you at conversion to produce Christian character and good fruit.
- b) Being baptized in water in the name of Jesus.
- c) Being baptized in the Holy Spirit for the purpose of Christian witness.

How do we receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit? By faith in the Name of Jesus! The ascended Lord Jesus Christ, our heavenly High Priest is the one who baptizes with the Holy Ghost and He promises this blessing to all who believe!

Acts 2:38,39 *And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."*

Peter told the newly saved believers at Pentecost that they were to complete the 3-part process by a) getting baptized in water and b) being baptized in the Holy Spirit. He then adds that the promise of the Holy Spirit was for all believers, near and far, in all generations.

So seek God for the baptism in the Holy Spirit, ask for His power to come upon you, and believe that His promise will be true for you!



THE INFILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Now we will look a bit further at the difference between the Holy Spirit in us, and the Holy Spirit upon us. First the work of the Spirit within us:

Galatians 5:22-23 MKJV *But the fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, (23) meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

These verses describe the work of the Holy Spirit in us – producing love, joy, peace and other internal qualities such as wisdom. The first bible character who is specifically called “Spirit-filled” is Bezalel the craftsman who built the tabernacle:

Exodus 31:1-5 MKJV *And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, (2) Behold, I, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. (3) And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all workmanship, (4) to devise designs; to work in gold, and in silver, and in bronze, (5) and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all workmanship.*

This filling is an internal work of God, which made Bezalel wise in his commissioned work. Later we find out that God also made him able to teach others also (Exodus 35:30-35) and that God gave wise hearts to those Bezalel instructed (Exodus 36:1,2).

The infilling of the Spirit combats the flesh and produces wisdom, character and spiritual fruit. While the Spirit upon us is for combat against the world and the devil and produces evangelism, prophecy, healing and church growth.

Lets' look at a lengthy passage from the book of Galatians:

Galatians 5:16-26 *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy,⁴ drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.*

The Galatians had a huge problem with legalism and with wanting to add Jewish laws and rituals such as circumcision to the Christian gospel of salvation by grace through faith alone. In this passage, Paul hits a home run with a few key truths:

- If you walk by the Spirit you will not gratify the lusts of the flesh because we have crucified them with their passions and desires (v.16,24)
- If you walk by the Spirit you are not under the Jewish Law (v. 18,22)
- If we don't walk by the Spirit we will end up with all the nasty works of the flesh in our lives (v. 19-21, 26)
- If we do walk by the Spirit and keep in step with the Spirit we will end up with the wonderful fruit of the Spirit in our lives (V. 22,23,25)

To summarize again: The Spirit wars against the flesh and against legalism (trying to serve God via the flesh), He puts to death our evil desires and then produces the fruit of the Spirit!

As the fruit of the Spirit are produced we enjoy a joyful, singing, celebratory and thankful Spirit-filled life (see Ephesians 5:18-21 above).

So how do we do this? How do we get filled with the Spirit? Jesus gives us some sound advice in Luke chapter 11:

Luke 11: 9-13 *And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. 11 What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; 12 or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

We need to ask persistently, like the annoying neighbor in Luke 18, and we need to ask confidently with the assurance that our Heavenly father who gives good gifts to His children will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!

So when you get up in the morning ask Jesus to fill you with the Holy Spirit! Make it a request like this: "Lord, you have commanded me to be filled with the Spirit, I cannot do that in my own strength, please fill me now, in Jesus Name Amen!"

There is a natural correlation between being filled with the Spirit and having our minds set on the Spirit (see chapter two). It is as we set our minds on spiritual things then the switch is opened, and we are naturally filled with the Holy Spirit!

LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL RICHLY IN YOU

In the first part of this chapter we looked at the baptism of the Holy Spirit, in the second part we saw the infilling of the Holy Spirit and now in this section we will look at the relationship between the Spirit and the Word.

Colossians 3:16,17 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

The word of Christ here is the "logos of Christ", the deep words, the truths and prophecies of Scripture and the commands of Christ Himself. What do we do with them? We teach and admonish one another in all wisdom.

The rest of these verses are strikingly similar to the result of being filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18-21. The Spirit of God is also the Wisdom of God; they are equivalent. When we are filled with Wisdom, then we are also filled with the Spirit!

Serious bible study and in-depth application of the Word of God are very much part of living the Spirit-filled Christian life. The wisdom of God, flows from the Word of God and brings joy and gladness to our hearts!

The admonition to “let the Word of Christ dwell richly” reminds us of the good soil in the parable of the Sower in Matthew 13, where the good soil brings forth 30, 60 and 100-fold what was sown!

Matthew 13:23 *As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”*

The joyful, fruitful Spirit-filled Christian is the one who “hears the Word and understands it”. Sometimes this is automatic but at other times, it requires serious inquiry, bible study and research. Every serious Christian who can afford it should have the following:

- a) A good study bible e.g. the NKJV Study Bible
- b) A concordance or some bible software for easily finding relevant bible verses. Some good free bible study programs include YouVersion (app), E-Sword and The Word
- c) A bible dictionary such as the New Bible Dictionary for all the cultural aspects e.g to find out what a “breastplate” or a “sycamore tree” is you look up a bible dictionary.
- d) A set of commentaries on the books of the Bible. e.g. Tyndale commentaries, IVP or similar.

This will help you to study the Bible deeply and you will grow in Christ as a result. You might also want to try some of the [bible reading plans](#) from Into Thy Word ministries.

Studying the Bible is a very important part of growing as a Spirit-filled Christian and it is often easier to study in a group than alone. Consider joining in a good bible study group, bible class or going to a good local bible college which is accredited and biblical in its teaching.

As I conclude chapter three I want you to do three things:

- a) Get baptized in the Holy Spirit
- b) Be filled with the Holy Spirit
- c) Let the word of Christ dwell richly in you.

You will be able to do these things if you are born-again and are setting your mind on the things of the Spirit! Being filled with the Spirit and the Word will give you the joy, peace and inner energy to live the Spirit-filled Christian life!

Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between the baptism of the Spirit and the infilling of the Spirit?
2. How can Christians let the Word of God dwell richly in them?
3. What point in this chapter made the most sense to you?
4. Is there anything in the chapter that you will apply to your life immediately?

Stage 4 – Worshipping In The Spirit

Once we are filled with the Spirit and the Word we naturally start singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs and begin worshipping in the Spirit. This is incredibly powerful and leads to great spiritual results. In this chapter, we will discuss worshipping in the Spirit.

John 4:23, 24 *But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”*

Worship is not just a few songs before a sermon, instead it is a key to blessings by God and to power, life and accuracy in Christian ministry.

Jesus tells us that we must worship “in Spirit and in truth” (John4:24). God seeks out spiritual worshippers in order to bless them! So one of the keys to being blessed in life and ministry is to have a life of worship that is absolutely full of Spirit and Truth!

Psalms 100:4,5 *Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.*

True worship comes about as born-again believers set their minds on the things of the Spirit, are filled with the Spirit, and move into singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. This means that in order to get into the place of worship, which is the place of blessing, we need to first set our minds on the Spirit and be filled with the Spirit.

This eventually leads to deeper forms of worship such as:

1. Praying in the Spirit
2. Gathering together in the Spirit
3. Singing in the Spirit and
4. Prophesying in the Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of worship, and being filled with the Spirit is being filled with the desire to worship. This is because the Holy Spirit causes us to give God His true worth and worthiness, which of course results in worship!

The Holy Spirit also glorifies Jesus (John 16:13,14) which then results in worship.

Paul contrasts worship in the Spirit with worship in the flesh (rituals, race, legalism):

Philippians 3:3 For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh....

These verses in Philippians are part of Paul’s argument against those who wanted Christians to adopt circumcision and other Jewish worship practices. Paul maintains that the externals are of

no value. That it is only the Spirit that counts and not the building, the rituals, or the physical characteristics, or racial descent of the worshippers.

There is vain worship, there is worship that does not work, that does not please God, that is dry and dead and awful:

Matthew 15:7,8 *You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: 8 “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; 9 in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”*

If we marginalize spiritual worship, and replace it with human tradition, we end up dry and dead. We end up spiritually powerless. Then we go back to the flesh, to pride and to the ideas and methods of the world. Worship must not be on the far edge of the Christian life, rather it must be right at the center!

When we worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus our life and ministry becomes alive, living, powerful and worthwhile. Our ego dies in worship. Our ego dies as we glory in Christ Jesus, and then the righteous and good things of God come forth.

True worship is not a mere posture of the body but a renewal of the mind:

Romans 12:1-2 *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

As we worship in the Spirit, we enter into heavenly places and the spiritual flow within us produces the fruit of the Spirit. For instance, when we worship in the Spirit we feel more peaceful, joyful, loving and kind. Consistent worship makes develops temporary feelings into deeply established facets of our character.

Therefore, instead of just feeling joyful when we are at church, we become a continually joyful person on a day-to-day basis. Such worship is a key part of the process of the renewal of the mind described in Romans 12:1,2 above, and throughout the Psalms.

Spirit-filled worship was a key to the sending out of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13 as the elders of the church at Antioch were praying, fasting, and ministering unto the Lord.

Acts 13: 1-3 *Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 While they were*

worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Therefore, before the Spirit-filled Christian can go out and minister to others, he or she must learn how to minister to the Lord in anointed prayer and fasting. We should never be so busy that we push worship to the margins of our ministry.

Time is under God's control and if we spend time in worship then God will help us to save time on other tasks so that our results are even magnified and multiplied. Glory in the Lord and His glory will come upon you, and your family, and your work, and your ministry!

The kind of worship that God desires is from the heart, in the Spirit, in Truth and in the Name of Jesus. It is not cold, dead, hypocritical, or merely a human ritual. True worship is a living product of a holy and loving community of grace.

Singing, prayer, and the Scriptures have always been part of effective Christian worship and as we saw in the last chapter, both being filled with the Spirit and being filled with the Word produce worship states where people sing in their hearts with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

Worship needs to be done with a focus on the glory of God.

When we read the book of Revelation we observe a struggle between two groups of people:

- a) The true worshippers of the Creator God who creates the heaven, the earth, the seas and the springs of water and redeems mankind and
- b) The false and idolatrous worshippers of the image of the Beast who is socially, militarily and economically totally dominant on planet Earth at the time.

Those who worship the image of the Beast end up in eternal torment. Those who refuse to worship the image of the Beast, and worship the true Creator God, receive eternal glory, reigning and ruling with Christ in the New Jerusalem. So, who we worship and how we worship is vitally important!

How then do we go about worshipping God in Spirit and in Truth? Here is a list of ideas:

- Prayerfully reading the Bible
- Listening to anointed Christian music
- Developing an attitude of gratitude and thanksgiving to God
- Going to a Spirit-filled church
- Walking in nature while thinking about God.
- Praying in tongues, Singing in tongues
- Going to a prayer meeting
- Praying with two or three good friends
- Make a list of Bible promises then praising God for each of them
- Playing worship music with a group of Christian friends, join a good Christian choir
- Keep a prayer journal
- Stay alert for what God is doing in your life and thank Him for it

People worship in different ways. I prefer classical music and hymns, however I know that others might prefer contemporary Christian music. Some get almost nothing from observing nature while others are enraptured by it and give praise to God. Some like music that pulses through them at 90 decibels while others prefer silence and quiet contemplation.

It is up to you to find the way that you worship best and to make time and space in your life for it. For worship to be “in the Spirit” you simply have to have your mind fully set on Christ, on the things of the Spirit, and be filled with the Spirit.

Do not just worship alone. Biblical worship, from Genesis to Revelation is mainly in large groups, with occasional small groups and house churches and some individual worship. There is a need to acknowledge one another and be with one another in worship. The biblical metaphors for new covenant worship structures involve individuals being part of a larger organic entity. For instance, we are individual organs in the body of Christ, or living stones in a holy temple that is Christ.

So these metaphors involve three things: a) an individual Christian b) a larger corporate entity c) a living organic structure of some sort: body, bride, living stones etc.

Therefore, you need to worship in a group setting such as a cell group, life group, prayer meeting, church worship service or Christian festival.

Matthew 18:18-20 *Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 19 Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”*

Hebrews 10:23,24 *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

Discussion Questions

1. What is the fate of those who worship the image of the Beast instead of Creator God?
2. Why is it important to worship in Spirit and Truth and not by human rituals and ideas?
3. How can Christians develop a life of worship, gratitude and praise?
4. How are you going to improve your worship life?

Stage 5 – Walking In The Spirit

Once we have begun worshipping in the Spirit our inner man, the New Creation is strengthened mightily and the fruit of the Spirit begin to ripen so it is time to get moving for God! In this chapter we will discuss how to walk in the Spirit.

Romans 8:4 *..in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

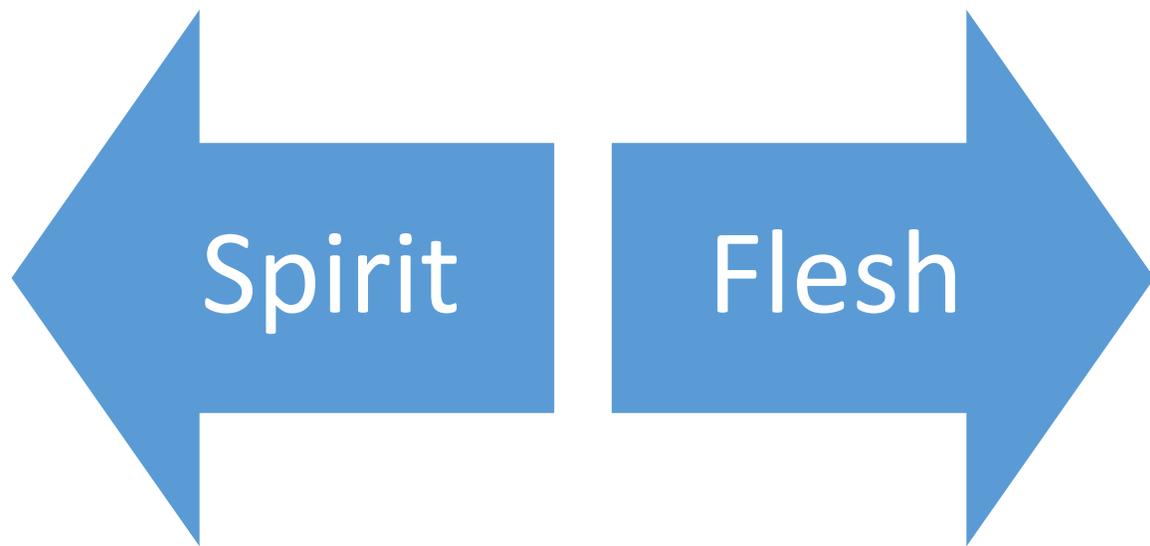
Romans tells us that there are two ways of “walking” – in the flesh, or in the Spirit; and that if we walk in the Spirit we fulfill the righteous requirements of the Law. In other words. We get absolutely everything (in the spiritual life) right! We do not just get half of God’s Law correct, we fulfill all of it! The secret to having a spiritual life that works properly is this mysterious “walking in the Spirit” which fortunately for us is explained in detail in Galatians chapter 5.

Galatians 5:16-26 *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.*

The New Testament was originally written in Greek, and here “walk” is the Greek word “peripateo” which means to walk about, to have a certain lifestyle and philosophical viewpoint. It was commonly used to refer to travelling philosophers.

So walking in the Spirit is having a lifestyle and a philosophy that is consistent with the Holy Spirit. If you are in the Spirit then your lifestyle will be distinctly different from those who live according to the flesh. If you are following Christ, then your personal life philosophy will be distinctly different from those who are following after this world. Walking in the Spirit is the conscious deliberate choice of righteous and spiritual living and thinking every single day.

Galatians 5:16 is the statement that if we walk by the Spirit we will not gratify the lusts of the flesh. The Greek is very strong, it actually says “you will in no way be able to gratify”. It is like saying “if you are in forward gear you will be totally unable to drive in reverse”. Because walking in the Spirit is going forward spiritually, and gratifying the flesh is going backward spiritually, and you cannot do both at the same time.



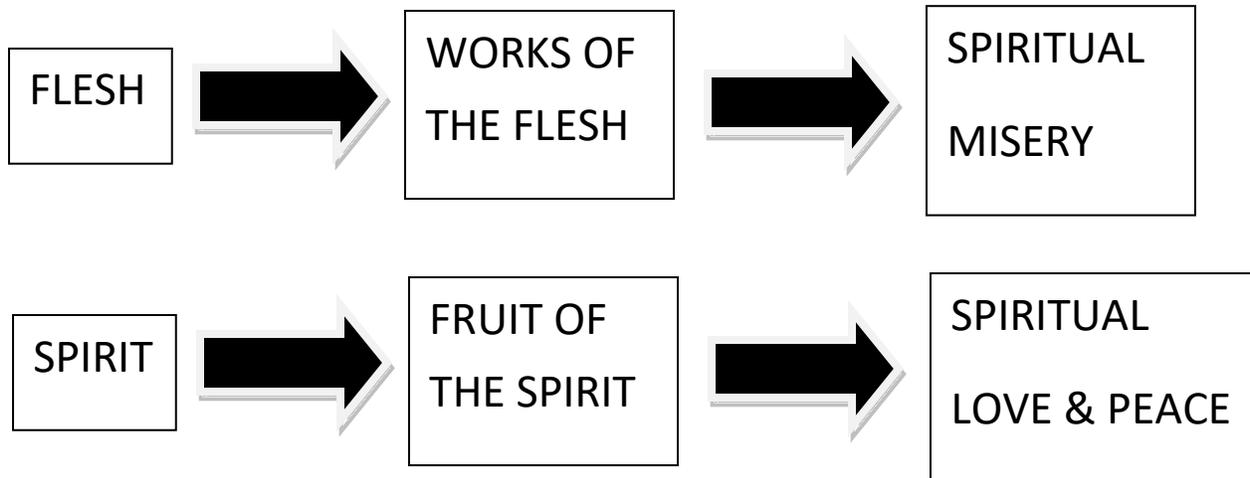
The next verse (Galatians 5:17) tells us that the flesh and the Spirit are total opposites and are in a long drawn-out conflict for control of the believers' mind and the believers' behavior. The flesh and the Spirit have opposing desires and directly opposite lifestyles. If you want to live by the flesh, the Spirit will jump in and stop you doing that. The Holy Spirit does not want you to live out of a "do whatever you want" anarchistic lifestyle.

In verse 18, we see the puzzling statement that if we are led by the Spirit we are not under the Law. The Christian is a person who follows the Spirit and not just the legalistic letter. We are like Jesus, and we are not like the Pharisees. We are people who live in love, not people who nit-pick our neighbor. You will learn a LOT more about that in the next chapter.

Galatians 5:19-21 describe the works of the flesh. They are terrible, violent and abusive. If we are walking in the Spirit there is no way we will do such awful things. Paul gives numerous "sin lists" in his epistles because the Gentiles had lived such lawless lives prior to conversion that some of the newer Christians had little or no sense of Christian ethics. So, in order to help these new Christians Paul gives a list of things that are definitely NOT spiritual at all: *sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.*

This includes sins of the heart such as jealousy and envy; sins of the flesh such as immorality, impurity, and sensuality; sins of the spirit such as idolatry and sorcery; sins against others such as enmity, strife, rivalries, dissensions and divisions; and sins against moral order such as drunkenness and orgies. Just in case Paul has missed you favorite work of the flesh he finishes off with the phrase “and things like these”.

Nearly all of the sins of the flesh are self-centered and self-gratifying and flow from an “its-all-about-me” mindset. The fleshly person wants immediate gratification and could not care less about who they hurt along the way!



On the other hand, the Spirit-filled person produces positive things. He or she produces the varied fruit of the Spirit: *22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus Christ by making us like Him. The varied fruit of the Spirit are simply Christ in us, and are Christ living His life out through us. When we are filled with the Spirit and bear the fruit of the Spirit we are moving toward our spiritual destiny; which is being like Jesus.

As we walk in the Spirit we adopt a lifestyle and a person philosophy that produces the fruit of the Spirit and which reduces the work of the flesh! This leads straight to the next verse in Galatians chapter 5: *24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

When we walk in the Spirit we always end up carrying our cross. Carrying our cross means that we crucify our selfish, fleshly evil desires and we focus on carrying out the will of God instead.

Jesus tells His disciples what it means to take up one's Cross:

Matthew 16: 24 *Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? 27 For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.*

Taking up the Cross means following Jesus Christ despite the fleshly temptation to grasp for the "whole world". Taking up the Cross preserves our soul and means we will be rewarded on the Day of Judgment. Those who settle for the worldly things instead end up losing their soul.

When we walk in the Spirit, we deny ourselves, the lusts of the flesh, and the temptations of this world, and follow Christ obediently by the power of the Holy Spirit! Someone doing that simply cannot fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

In the next chapter of Galatians Paul reinforces this message when he writes:

Galatians 6:14 *But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

When we walk in the Spirit we boast only in the cross. When we walk in the Spirit we are crucified to the world. When we turn our back on the world, and walk in the Spirit we are headed in the right direction. We have engaged forward gear in the spiritual life!

In Galatians 5:25,26 Paul tells us how to keep in step with the Spirit:

25 *If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.*

Our egos can destroy our walk with God. We can be walking in the Spirit and going forward when all of a sudden we get out of rhythm and out of line. Our ego gets hooked and we become conceited, provoking one another and envying one another. Church rivalry, church politics, theological disputes, complaining about leadership, pushing to be "up front"; these things get us out of step spiritually. They break up the rhythms of grace.

"Keeping in step" is a military phrase. It is used for those famous Marine drill teams who march and do drills in perfect harmony, following the exact detailed instructions of the Drill Sergeant. Should a member of the Drill Team decide to march to their own beat, or to disobey the Sergeant, then everything would quickly break down into disorder.

Imagine the Holy Spirit as your Drill Sergeant, the One who keeps the Church in perfect order. When we stay in step with the Spirit, everything works fine. However, if we engage in rivalry, envy, boasting and conceit then everything falls into disarray.

So then, how do we walk in the Spirit? By choosing to do so over and over again. As soon as you sense that you are “in the flesh:” repent. Say sorry to God, and get back on track. Ask to be filled with the Spirit, and move on with your Christian life. Stop driving in reverse. Change gears, and move forward spiritually!

We walk in the Spirit by making a serious daily decision to obey the commandments of Jesus Christ, in love, and in the power of the Holy Ghost. We sternly commit ourselves to renouncing the flesh. We are crucified to the world.

We also put away strife and ego and arguing and complaining and all forms of immorality including pornography. We pick up our Cross and follow Jesus, but not in our own strength, but in the strength of Christ who dwells in us.

As we walk in the Spirit, we produce the fruit of the Spirit. Our character and our mindset change and day by day they are renewed. The fruit of the Spirit become permanent attributes of our character, and we become mature Christians.

Discussion Questions

1. What does Galatians 5:16 mean for the Christian’s spiritual life?
2. How can we avoid doing the works of the flesh?
3. How is taking up our Cross part of walking in the Spirit?
4. What does it mean to keep in step with the Spirit?

Stage 6 – Being Led of the Holy Spirit

Romans 8:14 *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*

Galatians 5:18 *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

Luke 4: 1 *Then Jesus returned from the Jordan, full of the Holy Spirit, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness*

Once we walk in the Spirit and keep in step with the Spirit, then we are led by the Spirit. ***Being led by the Spirit is having the correct spiritual intuition about what to do next.***

You cannot lead someone who is asleep in a LazyBoy armchair! You can only lead someone who is already up and moving. Once we start walking in the Spirit we need to go somewhere; and it is then that we need to be led by the Holy Spirit.

In all the above verses the word for “led” stems from the Greek word “ago” (long O at end) which means both to “lead” and “to drive” so the Spirit-led person can be both led by the Spirit as in “guided”, or driven by the Spirit as under a powerful external impulse.

This intuitive leading of the Spirit shows us what to do in a few different ways:

- a) He directly tells us what to do e.g. “go up to this chariot” for Phillip the evangelist
- b) He forms a godly driving impulse within us e.g. compassion and we are driven by compassion to do the will of God that is right in front of us e.g. Jesus healing distressed people.
- c) The Spirit provokes us from within to do something e.g. as Paul observed the idols in Athens.
- d) The Holy Spirit creates a compelling intuitive idea within us e.g. that we must preach the gospel to a tribe in South America.
- e) The Spirit may speak to us through Scripture giving us a godly value or biblical principle that solves the problem of what to do next e.g. to turn the other cheek when provoked.
- f) We may have an experience that the Holy Spirit sheds light on, in such a way that we say “Aha, this means that” which shows us the next thing to do e.g. Moses at the burning bush.
- g) We may have the Holy Spirit lead us through an angel, a prophecy, a word of wisdom or even through the sermon on Sunday morning; so that we sense that it is God directing our path.
- h) The Spirit may speak to us through the wise counsel of a mature Christian, or even through a book like this, so that we sense that the right path has been shown to us.

This guiding intuition is formed within us as we are filled with the Spirit and with the Word, as we pray, as meditate on Scripture, and as we listen for the voice of God in the Christian conscience. We have our senses trained by use to discern good from evil (Hebrews 5:14).

Hebrews 5:14 *But solid food is for the mature — for those whose senses have been trained to distinguish between good and evil.*

Even Jesus was led by the Spirit (Luke 4:1 above). So if Jesus could not “figure it out for Himself” and so direct His own life, then neither can we. The sons of God live by the rules of Heaven and are led into all righteousness by God Himself.

The following verses show how totally dependent Jesus was upon guidance from God:

John 5:19 *Then Jesus replied, “I assure you: The Son is not able to do anything on His own, but only what He sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, the Son also does these things in the same way.*

John 5:30 *“I can do nothing on My own. I judge only as I hear, and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.*

John 8:28 *So Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing on My own. But just as the Father taught Me, I say these things.*

John 14:10 *Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words I speak to you I do not speak on My own. The Father who lives in Me does His works.*

So being led of the Spirit is not just getting spooky ideas in your head. It is giving up your own stubborn will for God’s will and then relentlessly following wherever God’s will leads. Jesus did nothing on his own. He did not give in to the desire for autonomy that is part of the selfishness of the flesh.

The flesh wants do its own thing. The flesh does not want to please God. The flesh just wants to please itself.

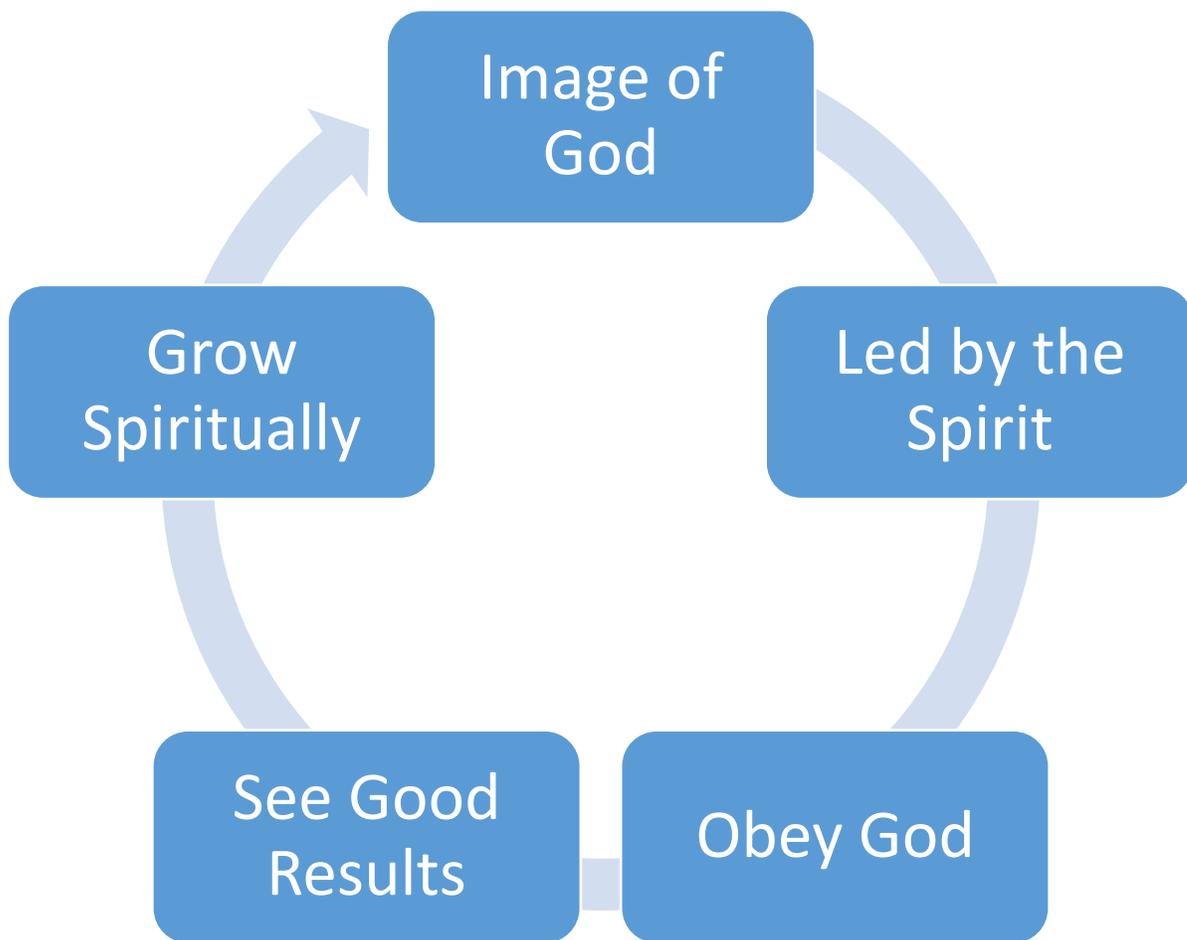
When the Spirit leads us, we are led out of the zone of the flesh and into the place of testing our desires, just as Jesus was tested in the wilderness. Jesus survived the temptation in the wilderness not because He was tough, but because the Spirit was constantly leading him!

Those who are led by the Spirit are sons of God. In the wilderness the Devil kept saying “if you are the Son of God” and hitting at precisely the point of His sonship. Jesus proved that He was the son of God by always following the Spirit and never following the Devil.

So being led by the Spirit is an essential part of the Christian life that demonstrates that we are truly children of our Heavenly Father because we always listen to Him.

Now, in recent years, being led by the Spirit has got a bad reputation. Charlatans and mystics and followers of dreams and visions and prophecies have put subjective experiences in first place and relegated Scripture and conscience to the last place.

Let me say it straight out, being led by the Spirit is not that mystical most of the time. Being led by the Spirit can be as simple as giving back extra change that you were mistakenly given at the supermarket. You do not need a dream or a vision or a voice in your head to do that, you just do it because the desire of the Spirit is for you to be honest and faithful and you just do it automatically.



The Holy Spirit is our omnipresent Teacher in the midst of the situations of life so that we do not need a priest or a Rabbi to know what to do, rather our conscience and our spiritual intuition immediately tells us what to do:

1 John 2:20,27 *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.... But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.*

This means that as we journey through life, from circumstance to circumstance, God's anointing (the Holy Spirit) will teach us everything we need to know and to do. For instance:

- You are led by the Spirit when “something” tells you to slow down when you are driving too fast on the freeway and you do so.
- You are led by the Spirit when your conscience tells you to apologize to someone and to forgive someone even though you do not want to, and you obey.
- You are led by the Spirit when you read His textbook the Bible, and you read about turning the other cheek and you realize that you need to do that, and you do it.
- You are led by the Spirit when you feel deep compassion and go out of your way for someone and later you ask yourself “why did I do that?”
- You are led by the Spirit when you read what the Bible says about the fate of the lost and you decide to start sharing the gospel more often.
- You are led by the Spirit when you read the Sermon On The Mount about money and possessions and you realize that living more simply might be a great idea!

From time to time, this may involve dreams, visions, or words of knowledge but they are the exception and not the rule.

When the Spirit is leading you, life becomes much more transparent and clear and you have a deep inner sense of what you should be doing next and why you are doing it.

Life becomes filled with meaning and purpose. God is in charge. You have handed over the reins of your life to Him.

So we see that the sons of God are God-directed and are in a New Covenant with Him:

Hebrews 8:10,11 *But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people. And each person will not teach his fellow citizen, and each his brother, saying, “Know the Lord,” because they will all know Me, from the least to the greatest of them.*

God instructs us internally by the Holy Spirit. His laws are written on our hearts. A new consciousness arises with us. We become aware of God's will. We learn what God wants us to do and we do it almost by instinct (though we may struggle now and then).

So how do we know God's will from the Devil's temptation or from some random impulse going through our brains? Let's look at some verses from James chapter 3:

James 3:13-18 *Who is wise and has understanding among you? He should show his works by good conduct with wisdom's gentleness. But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart, don't brag and deny the truth. Such wisdom does not come from above but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where envy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every kind of evil. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without favoritism and hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who cultivate peace.*

1. God's will is pure, is never of the flesh and never panders to the ego or selfish ambition.
2. God's will is righteous, and does not engage in lies, frauds, shortcuts or temptations.
3. God's will is patient, and is not hurried, hasty or manipulative.
4. God's will is peaceful, and is never prideful, resentful, carnal, divisive or rebellious.
5. God's will is impartial and does not involve playing politics or engaging in favoritism.
6. God's will is merciful, gentle and reasonable and is never harsh, cruel or unyielding.

We can also add:

7. God's will lines up with the revealed will of God in the Bible.
8. God's will is full of wisdom and has the ring of truth about it.
9. God's will is sober, humble, and real and often looks like hard work and common sense.
10. God's will helps other people to become like Jesus.
11. God's will tends to fit in with His previous work in your life and with your gifts and abilities.
12. God's will is generally open to being checked out and verified and stands up to some basic tests of feasibility, reasonableness, purity and sound doctrine.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever had an experience where you were sure that God was leading you to do something? Did you do it?
2. How does God lead us to do things that will improve our Christian character?
3. Can you think of some examples of God leading people in the Bible?
4. How would your life be different if the Lord always led you?

Stage 7 – Being Taught by the Holy Spirit

God leads us into some very unusual situations. Sometimes He sends us into the wilderness to face the Devil, or calls us to walk on water, or asks us to preach the gospel to people we are unfamiliar with. Time and time again, God leads us into a spiritual crisis or an impossible task so that He can show us His glorious power and teach us amazing lessons.

In this chapter, we will learn about being taught by the Spirit. God speaks to the deepest part of us to teach us the things of God. His Spirit speaks to our spirit declaring Heavenly truth in spiritual forms:

1 Corinthians 2:9-16 *9 But as it is written: What eye did not see and ear did not hear, and what never entered the human mind — God prepared this for those who love Him. 10 Now God has revealed these things to us by the Spirit, for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man that is in him? In the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who comes from God, so that we may understand what has been freely given to us by God. 13 We also speak these things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual things to spiritual people. 14 But the unbeliever does not welcome what comes from God's Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; he is not able to understand it since it is evaluated spiritually. 15 The spiritual person, however, can evaluate everything, yet he himself cannot be evaluated by anyone. 16 For who has known the Lord's mind, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.*

1. God is downloading heavenly truth into us, things that eye has not seen, nor ear heard, or entered into the mind of man. The natural man cannot grasp this spiritual truth at all. It is knowledge that is received from a heavenly source.
2. We have been given the Spirit who is from God so that we might understand what has been freely given to us by God.
3. We are able to receive this incomprehensible truth because He has given us the spiritual mind of Christ.
4. Paul expressed these spiritual truths in spiritual words and not in the philosophical arguments of Greek rhetoric.
5. These spiritual truths enable us to correctly judge life's situations and to fully understand the gospel and the work of Christ.

The apostle Peter was directly taught by God. Peter's spiritual intuition was so razor sharp that Jesus made Peter the head of the church and used him to resolve church disputes such as the clash between the conservative Jewish Christians, and Paul and Barnabas, in Acts chapter 15. It all starts in Caesarea Philippi:

Matthew 16:13-19 *When Jesus had come to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They said, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He asked them, "But who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are*

the Christ, the Son of the living God!” Then Jesus told him, “How blessed you are, Simon son of Jonah, since flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, though my Father in heaven has. I tell you that you are Peter, and it is on this rock that I will build my church, and the powers of Hell will not conquer it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom from heaven. Whatever you prohibit on earth will have been prohibited in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will have been permitted in heaven.”

Jesus calls Peter “blessed” because Peter was able to receive accurate spiritual knowledge from God. In this case the revelation that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of the Living God”. God Himself had taught the apostle Peter the deep theological truth that Jesus was not just the Christ (which some had already guessed) but was also the Son of the Living God.

Jesus praises Peter for being able to know things without human instruction. Peter had received something that “eye had not seen, ear heard, nor had entered into the mind of man”.

Peter’s spiritual sensitivity, his accurate reception of divine truth direct from heaven, made him the leader of the young band of disciples. Jesus called Peter the “Rock” (Petros) and said that he would be the leader of the early Church. And that is exactly what happened.

Another instance of Peter’s exceptional spiritual intuition was when he walked on water:

Matthew 14:24-33 *By this time the boat was in the middle of the sea and was being battered by the waves, because the wind was against them. Shortly before dawn Jesus came to them, walking on the sea. When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified and cried out, “It’s a ghost!” And they screamed in terror. “Have courage!” Jesus immediately told them. “It’s me. Stop being afraid!” Peter answered him, “Lord, if it’s you, order me to come to you on the water.” Jesus said, “Come on!” So Peter got down out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came to Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he was frightened. As he began to sink, he shouted, “Lord, save me!” At once Jesus reached out his hand, caught him, and asked him, “You who have so little faith, why did you doubt?” As they got into the boat, the wind stopped blowing. Then the men in the boat began to worship Jesus, saying, “You certainly are the Son of God!”*

Peter sensed that Jesus could cause him to walk on water. Peter suddenly understood that by faith in Jesus, he could do all that Jesus could do. When Jesus said: “Come”, Peter stepped out and walked on the water. Peter did what Jesus was doing, not because Peter was the same as Jesus, but because Peter had faith in Jesus. Peter learned two big lessons:

1. By faith in Jesus, he Peter could participate in all that Jesus was doing and even work the extraordinary works that Jesus worked.
- 2, That without faith he was just an ordinary man subject to the ordinary laws of nature and would sink like a stone.

The first lesson has to be learned from God alone. The power of faith in Jesus is something that has to be personally realized. I cannot teach it to you. In fact, the best Bible teacher in the world cannot teach the power of faith in Jesus to you. You have to go “Aha” and get it. It is the

opposite of all common sense and traditional religion. It bends our minds to think that we can work the works of Christ by faith (John 14:12). We think that we have to be super-holy. Peter “got it and did it” (though only for a short while). That is being taught by God!

Let us look at a few other times when the Apostle Peter seems to have received a download from Heaven and a direct teaching from the Lord:

1. The Day of Pentecost – Peter speaks in tongues, prophesies, and interprets the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit citing a prophecy from Joel 2. Peter then goes on to preach a sermon that saw three thousand people saved.
2. The Healing of the Lame Man – In Acts 3 Peter commanded the lame man to walk in the name of Jesus. Jesus was not around physically. However, Peter still believed that he had the power to work miracles by faith. This miracle astounded Jerusalem. It was the first major healing performed by the new Christian community.
3. The Salvation of Cornelius – In Acts 10 and 11 a series of visions and angelic visitations gets Peter to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, possibly against his will, and then to understand that God had opened the door of salvation to the Gentiles also.
4. The Jerusalem Council – In Acts 15 God gives Peter the wisdom to resolve a huge dispute in the early church over whether new converts had to obey the Jewish Law.

Sometimes God leads us into a crisis so that we can cry out for wisdom and receive it from God via the Holy Spirit. God took Peter into numerous crises so that Peter would seek out, and then receive, God’s wisdom for that time and place.

The apostle Peter was a highly receptive natural learner, who easily tuned into God, sought out Jesus, followed Him, and learned from Him. So how can we do the same?

Firstly, we should be eagerly curious about spiritual things, hungering and thirsting after righteousness:

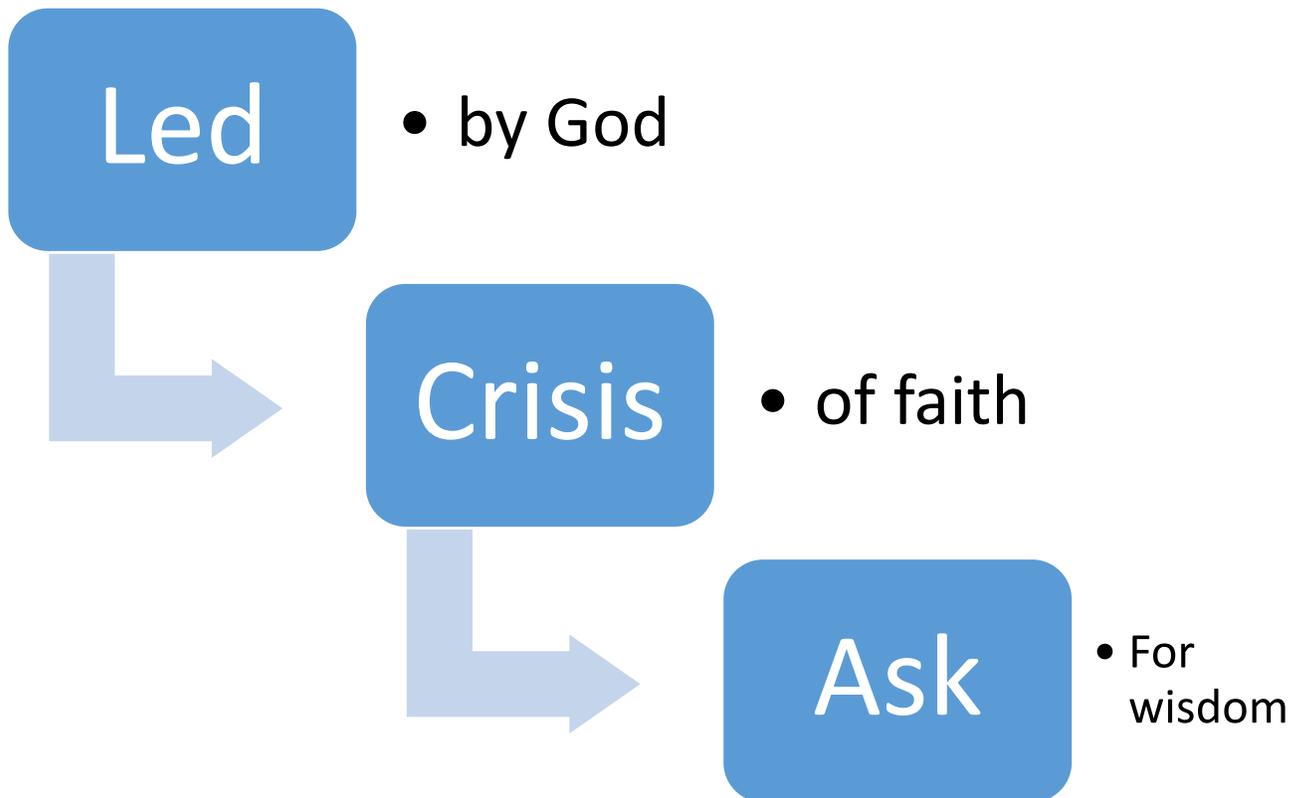
Matthew 5:6 *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*

Matthew 6:33 *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

Matthew 7:7,8 *“Keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who searches finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.*

Next, we should expect to receive wisdom directly from God whenever we need it in life:

James 1:5-8 *Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without criticizing, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without doubting. For the doubter is like the surging sea, driven and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. An indecisive man is unstable in all his ways.*



God will give us wisdom “generously and without criticizing”. God will never say to you: “That is such a dumb question, why on earth do you need wisdom in that area, don’t you ever learn?” God will graciously give His wisdom to you in abundance!

You need to expect heavenly downloads. God wants to teach you. Divine knowledge is not just for saints and apostles, it is also for every normal Christian so that we might be able to live holy lives. God’s instruction is part of the New Covenant and part of Pentecost:

Acts 2:17,18 *And it will be in the last days, says God, that I will pour out My Spirit on all humanity; then your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. I will even pour out My Spirit on My male and female slaves in those days, and they will prophesy.*

God promises wisdom for all who ask, even supernatural wisdom in dreams, visions and prophecy! God wants to teach you in the way that you should go.

Now the main thing that God wishes to teach us is how to love one another:

1 Thessalonians 4:9 *About brotherly love: You don't need me to write you because you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.*

God directly taught the Thessalonians how to love one another! Which is no surprise because “love thy neighbor” is the Great Commandment (Romans 13:8-10) and the goal of all Christian instruction.

1 Timothy 1:5 *Now the goal of our instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.*

Therefore, if you pray and ask God to teach you wisdom on how to love people better, you will certainly receive His divine instruction.

God is constantly trying to teach you about Jesus Christ His Son, and about how to have faith, how to love, how to have joy, and how to do the work of God. You just have to believe that this wisdom is available to you and receive it!

Discussion Questions

1. Has God ever used a crisis to teach you an important life lesson?
2. How did God instruct the apostle Peter? How did Peter's worldview change?
3. Do you have a problem believing that God will download wisdom into you?
4. What are the prerequisites for receiving wisdom from God?

Stage Eight – Love In The Spirit

We have just learned that one of the main things that God teaches us is how to love one another. Love is the image of God because God is love. Love is at the heart of the two great commandments to love God and love our neighbor. Moreover, love is the proper goal of all Christian instruction (along with faith and hope and a good conscience).

Now, the love mentioned in the New Testament is mainly a kind of love called agape love. “Agape” is a Greek word for spiritual sacrificial love that is without any trace of selfishness. Jesus dying for our sins on the Cross demonstrates it in action:

1 John 4:9,10 *God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His One and Only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

Agape love is not sexual love or sentimental attachment or family loyalty or even good friendship love. God’s love is the kind of love that we see in Jesus on the Cross. And that kind of love is impossible for the natural man. It is impossible for the carnal Christian, it is completely impossible unless we are filled with the Spirit. Agape love is God’s divine love in action!

John 13:34,35 *“I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

Jesus’ new commandment was new because He was commanding a different kind of love than anyone had seen before. Jesus was commanding the disciples to His kind of love: agape love, spiritual love, love driven by the very divine love of God. This love was the same kind of love that Jesus had, and Christ’s love was spiritual, that is, it came directly from the Holy Spirit.

So the love of God became visible in Jesus, and the love of Christ was to be made visible by the disciples, and is also to be made visible by us.

Love is the end of the spiritual journey. Love fulfills the Law. If you are truly living in agape love, then you are perfected. God requires nothing more of you than agape love:

Romans 10:8-10 *Do not owe anyone anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 The commandments: Do not commit adultery; do not murder; do not steal; do not covet; and whatever other commandment — all are summed up by this: Love your neighbor as yourself. 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Love, therefore, is the fulfillment of the law.*

If you are full of agape love then you are a completely mature Christian who is in the image of God. You have made it. Especially if you can love your enemies:

Matthew 5:43-48 *“You have heard that it was said, Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. For He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward will you have? Don’t even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing out of the ordinary? Don’t even the Gentiles do the same? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

Agape love is not a feeling and agape love is not an action you take or a decision that you make (though feelings, actions and decisions are involved). Agape love is the spiritual love of God entering into your soul and flowing out of you like rivers of living water to a needy world. It is high, hard and difficult. Agape love crucifies the flesh and is the characteristic sign of a true Christian.

You can obey the kind of love preached in most sermons by just being a good, nice person. You do not need to be born-again, and you certainly do not need to be worshipping in the Spirit. You just go and mow the lawn of the little old lady next door and tick it off on your list of good deeds for the day. This is a totally inadequate understanding of agape love.

A full life of agape love, the Jesus kind of love, is only possible when you are submitted to God as a new creation, are filled with the Spirit, are being led by the Spirit and are being taught by the Spirit how to love others. It comes from the living water within you!

Colossians 1:7-12 *You learned this from Epaphras, our dearly loved fellow slave. He is a faithful servant of Christ on your behalf, and he has told us about **your love in the Spirit**. For this reason also, since the day we heard this, we haven’t stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience, with joy giving thanks to the Father, who **has enabled you to share in the saints’ inheritance in the light**.*

It is a bit difficult to see at first, but as soon as Paul hears that the Colossians were full of “love in the Spirit” he starts rejoicing and praying for them because they had been enabled (by God) to share in the saint’s inheritance in the light.

Love in the Spirit takes us into the realm of spiritual inheritance and into the light. Until we engage in agape love there is still some darkness left in us, some selfishness, some nasty ego, some covetousness. However, once the living waters flow this gets washed away.

Romans 5:5 *This hope will not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*

God is love (1 John 4:8) and so the Holy Spirit is love, and pours out the agape love of God into our hearts. Love is not from the flesh. Love is not from the ego. Love is from God and He imparts it to us through the Holy Spirit, which is a Spirit of power, love and sound judgment:

2 Timothy 1:7 *For God has not given us a spirit of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.*

The apostle John explains in detail about how love is from God:

1 John 4:7-21 *Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His One and Only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us and His love is perfected in us. 13 This is how we know that we remain in Him and He in us: He has given assurance to us from His Spirit. 14 And we have seen and we testify that the Father has sent His Son as the world's Savior. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God — God remains in him and he in God. 16 And we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and the one who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him. 17 In this, love is perfected with us so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, for we are as He is in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. So the one who fears has not reached perfection in love. 19 We love because He first loved us. 20 If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother he has seen cannot love the God he has not seen. 21 And we have this command from Him: The one who loves God must also love his brother.*

There is so much in this passage! It is so radical, so deep and so profound. The apostle explains to us that true agape spiritual love is God's initiative. We love because God loves us. We can only love with God's perfect love if we are in relationship with God. God is love, God sends love, God demonstrates love, and God's love casts out all fear! God's love is a soul-changing force for good that makes it impossible for us to hate our brother. If God's love is in us, we cannot hate. If we do hate our brother then God's agape love is absent from us.

1 John 2:9-11 *The one who says he is in the light but hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother remains in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and doesn't know where he's going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.*

If you have agape love for your brother, then you are in the light and have a spiritual inheritance. However, if you hate your brother you are in darkness and probably unaware of it and you have stumbled in the race and have no inheritance in God at all.

To walk in the Spirit is to walk in love, and the fruit of the Spirit is spiritual love and without agape love we are nothing! (Galatians 5:16-23 and 1 Corinthians 13:1-4)

Agape love is way more than social politeness or the occasional good deed. Agape love is the quality of your inner being when you are flooded and overwhelmed by the divine love of God and it just flows on out of you!

This is why you have to be worshipping in the Spirit! This is why your mind has to be set on the things of the Spirit! This is why you need to be filled with the Spirit and the Word! Only when you do these things will the world and the flesh and all the fear fade away for long enough to let the agape love of God be unleashed in you!

You have to set the spiritual target of living in agape love and letting God love others through you. Otherwise you can get stuck. You settle for less. You make bible knowledge, or conversions, or the size of your church or your position in ministry as your spiritual targets, and these ambitions just lead to arguments and egotism.

Even if you are successful in ministry, but are paranoid and jealous, then you are still in the darkness and are not in the light!

Every single Christian is aware that they should be living in love. However, very few make it their life ambition and central purpose in life to live in love! The flesh, its lusts and its ambitions trip us up every time.

We need all the other disciplines of the Spirit such as being filled with the Spirit and being led by the Spirit if we are to consistently live in the love of the Spirit; which is why it is at the top of the tree, and the final end of the spiritual continuum. We see this in Paul's spectacular prayer for the Ephesians:

Ephesians 3:14-19 *For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, **15** from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, **16** that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, **17** so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, **18** may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, **19** and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

As we come to know the love of Christ that passes knowledge we are filled up with all the fullness of God! Being filled with the fullness of God is obviously the end of the Continuum! So then how do we achieve this?

Firstly, we need to pray as Paul prayed! We need to desire the love of Christ with our whole being. We need to truly believe that without agape love we are never going to be a full and fulfilled human being. We need to put loving other people as a higher priority than our career and up there with having food and shelter. We can only do this if we are Spirit-filled.

Next, we need to start actually loving people. We need to try to be kind and loving at every turn. We need to create opportunities for Jesus in us to show up. A good way to do this is to study the “one another” commands in the New Testament such as: love one another, pray for one another, encourage one another, and be kindly affectionate to one another. See appendix for the 36 one another commands in the New Testament.

Colossians has a wonderful paragraph on how to be a loving Christian:

Colossians 3:12-15 *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.*

This may occasion a certain amount of material sacrifice:

1 John 3:16-18 *By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.*

Thirdly, we need to trust God to show up. The word for that is faith. You need to have the faith that as you put agape love into action God will show up and meet your needs and even bless you.

Discussion Questions

1. How is agape love very different from other kinds of love?
2. Who is our example of agape love and what did He do for us?
3. How is love the fulfillment of the law?
4. How can Christian live a life of agape love?

Free Resources From Cybermissions

Christian Starterkit (for brand-new believers) www.globalchristians.org/starterkit/

Walking In The Spirit (100 short studies) www.globalchristians.org/walkspirit/

Biblical EQ – A Christian Handbook For Emotional Transformation
www.biblicaleq.com

Prayer Courses and Resources: www.newtestamentprayer.com

Commentary On The Gospel of John: <http://www.globalchristians.org/john/>

Commentary On The Sermon On The Mount:
<http://www.globalchristians.org/sermon/index.htm>

Commentary on Acts 1-8 <http://www.globalchristians.org/acts/index.html>

Free Bible Courses By Email: www.globalchristians.org/email/

The Importance of Love: <http://www.globalchristians.org/eternity/love/>

Harvestime Evangelism and Church-Planting Course:
www.globalchristians.org/harvest/

Teacher and Facilitators Guide

The Spiritual Continuum is an ebook that is meant to be used as a discipleship tool in 1:1 or small group discussion with 18-35 year old Christians. It is designed for Bible-believing, born-again, Spirit-filled Christians from a wide range of denominations and does not push any particular church or organizational perspective.

The *Spiritual Continuum* is a practical guide for discipleship. It is not a theology textbook (though it contains bible teaching) and the emphasis should be on how the students put the teaching into practice. Try not to get distracted by too much theological discussion.

It is designed to be printed out and put in a 3-ring binder or similar folder. There is a wide bottom margin so students may take personal notes. Though the diagrams are in color they will work fine in black and white printing.

The *Spiritual Continuum* contains many bible verses. Students should be encouraged to bring their own bibles and look them up, not just read them from the text.

The concepts build from one chapter to the next, which means that the chapters should be studied in the order they are in the book. It also means that the discipleship sessions should be regular (weekly) rather than spaced too far apart so that concepts are not forgotten.

Students will be at different places and some may be uncomfortable with terms such as “baptism in the Spirit” and instructors should take time to personally listen to students and clarify areas they may have serious questions about. It is OK to go over a chapter a couple of times if it is necessary.

Feel free to add your own discussion questions to the discussion questions given at the end of each chapter.

You should continually emphasize the idea of PROCESS. After being born-again, the other seven spiritual disciplines contribute to the process of becoming like Christ. They are growing daily practices, rather than spiritual accomplishments to be ticked off on a spiritual checklist for Pharisees! The only two “one-off” events are being born-again and the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The rest (such as setting your mind on the Spirit) are life disciplines that must be continually revisited.

Also, emphasize the sequential interlocking nature of the various stages. That you must set your mind on the Spirit before anything much else can happen; that being filled with the Spirit must come before worshipping in the Spirit and so on.

Lastly, paint a strong picture of what it means to be mature in Christ and completely in the image of God as a loving person. Give students a vision and motivation for personal growth.

Teaching Points

In Chapter One the teacher should emphasize the following:

- The concept of spiritual growth being a continual process
- The necessity of being born-again
- What happens when someone is born-again and becomes a new creation
- That being born-again is not a religious work but a gracious gift of God.

Chapter Two:

- The difference between the flesh and the spirit
- The consequences of the mind set on the flesh vs. the mind set on the Spirit
- How to avoid getting stuck in fleshly thoughts
- How to focus on the things of God.

Chapter Three (This is a long chapter and may best be done in two different sessions):

- The difference between the Spirit IN and the Spirit UPON the believer.
- The necessity of both the Spirit and the Word
- The advantages of being baptized in the Holy Spirit
- The fact that the Christian life is a lot easier when you are filled with the Holy Spirit

Chapter Four:

- Worship as part of our personal transformation in Christ
- Worship as essential
- Worship as developing the fruit of the Spirit in us.
- Various ways to get involved in both personal and corporate worship.

Chapter Five (a very significant chapter that should be thoroughly understood)

- What walking in the Spirit means and how it involves lifestyle and worldview
- How walking in the Spirit neutralizes the flesh.
- How walking in the Spirit and carrying our Cross are connected.
- How to practically go about walking in the Spirit.

Chapter Six

- How the Greek word ‘ago’ can mean both “led” and “driven”
- The ways that Christians are led by the Spirit
- How being led by the Spirit can be perfectly ordinary and not mystical
- The tests of being authentically led by the Spirit (Scripture etc)

Chapter Seven

- How God leads us into a crisis where we need to learn from Him.
- How the Apostle Peter was taught directly by God
- Go over 1 Corinthians 2:9-16 in quite some detail
- How God teaches us to love one another

Chapter Eight

- How love fulfills the Law and God’s expectations of us
- What agape love is (and is not) and how it fits in with the Cross
- Go over the passage in 1 John 4:7-21 in detail with the student/s
- How love crucifies the flesh and is the opposite of fleshly hatred and strife.

The 36 “One Anothers” of the New Testament

1. “...Be at peace with each other.” (Mark 9:50)
2. “...Wash one another’s feet.” (John 13:14)
3. “...Love one another...” (John 13:34,35; 15:12,17; Romans 13:8, 1 Thessalonians 4:9, 1 Peter 3:8, 4:8; 1 John 3:11,23; 4:7,11,12; 2 John v5)
4. “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love...” (Romans 12:10)
5. “...Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12:10)
6. “Live in harmony with one another...” (Romans 12:16, 1 Peter 3:8)
7. “...Stop passing judgment on one another.” (Romans 14:13)
8. “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you...” (Romans 15:7)
9. “...Instruct one another.” (Romans 15:14)
10. “Greet one another with a holy kiss...” (Romans 16:16, 1 Corinthians 16:20, 2 Corinthians 13:12, 1 Peter 5:14)
11. “...When you come together to eat, wait for each other.” (I Cor. 11:33)
12. “...Have equal concern for each other.” (I Corinthians 12:25)
13. “...Serve one another in love.” (Galatians 5:13)
14. “If you keep on biting and devouring each other...you will be destroyed by each other.” (Galatians 5:15)
15. “Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.” (Galatians 5:26)
16. “Carry each other’s burdens...” (Galatians 6:2)
17. “...Be patient, bearing with one another in love.” (Ephesians 4:2, Colossians 3:13)
18. “Be kind and compassionate to one another...” (Ephesians 4:32)
19. “...Forgiving each other...” (Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13)

20. "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." (Ephesians 5:19)
21. "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Ephesians 5:21)
22. "...In humility consider others better than yourselves." (Philippians 2:3)
23. "Do not lie to each other..." (Colossians 3:9)
24. "Teach...[one another]" (Colossians 3:16)
25. "...Admonish one another (Colossians 3:16)
26. "...Make your love increase and overflow for each other." (I Thessalonians 3:12)
27. "...Encourage each other..."(I Thessalonians 4:18,5:11, Hebrews 3:13, 10:25)
28. "...Build each other up..." (I Thessalonians 5:11)
29. "...Spur one another on toward love and good deeds." (Hebrews 10:24)
30. "...Do not slander one another." (James 4:11)
31. "Don't grumble against each other..." (James 5:9)
32. "Confess your sins to each other..." (James 5:16)
33. "...Pray for each other." (James 5:16)
34. "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." (I Peter 4:9)
35. "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others..." (I Peter 4:10)
36. "...Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another..."(I Peter 5:5)

About The Author



John Edmiston is the CEO of Cybermissions and is a digital strategist with a passion for the unreached. John has been in Internet ministry for over 25 years (since 1991) and had the first Christian prayer website and the first major bible-teaching website on the Internet. He has many technology projects and consults with Christian organizations and ministry networks.

Life Story

John Edmiston was an atheist until the age of 21 when he was converted on the 1st May 1978 during the process of attempting to mathematically disprove the existence of God and the possibility of miracles. Eighteen months later, in 1980 John entered the Baptist Theological College of Queensland and completed the five year ordination course. At the same time he completed the post-graduate Bachelor of Divinity degree (equivalent to the M.Div. in the USA) from the Melbourne College of Divinity. John went on to pastor a Chinese church in 1984 and then in 1986 went to Papua New Guinea with APCM (now Pioneers). In 1991 began in Internet ministry going full-time in 1994 with Eternity Online Magazine. In early 2001 John went to the Philippines as a missionary and set up Internet based training for Asian pastors and Filipino missionaries. John & Minda Edmiston migrated to the USA in 2004 becoming US citizens in 2011. John now runs Cybermissions, a missions agency dedicated to using computers and the Internet to facilitate the Great Commission and which provides highly strategic training to God's church globally.

Preaching and Seminars

John Edmiston is available to do preaching and seminars in your church or missions agency. An 8 session *Spiritual Continuum* seminar can be done on a Friday night/Saturday.

Contact

Email: johned@cybermissions.org

Twitter: @Cybermissions

Phone: +1 310-844-6948

Address: Cybermissions 21615 Berendo Ave. (Ste. 400) Torrance CA 90502, USA