

GROWING IN GRACE

CEDAR CREEK COMMUNITY CHURCH

How should we then live?
Practical Christian living in light of the Gospel.

WEEK 5: WALKING IN THE SPIRIT PART 3

INTRODUCTION

- We are continuing our study on walking in the Spirit.
- Last week we looked at the ministries of the Holy Spirit and how He works more than perhaps we even know.
- We also looked at how the idea of walking in the Spirit has been taught throughout the years and is currently taught in churches today.
- We must be careful not to fall into common pitfalls:
 - Passively yielding to the Spirit...
 - This can take away from a personal responsibility and instead of fighting off sin, a believer may think they only need to pray and allow the Spirit to do His work.
 - Seeking emotional or experiential confirmation...
 - While emotions have been given to us from God and He does control what happens around us, we can't interpret them as answers from the Lord.
 - Legalism and Intellectualism...
 - This is attempting to substitute holiness with a personal checklist to live in a way that one believes is good and righteous.
- We also walked through **Galatians 5:16 - 25** "But I say, ***walk by the Spirit***, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. [17] For the flesh sets its desire against ***the Spirit***, and ***the Spirit*** against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. [18] But if you are ***led by the Spirit***, you are not under the Law. [19] Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, [20] idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife,

jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, [21] envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice 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] Now 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 ***walk by the Spirit***.

- This was to solidify our command to walk in the Spirit so that we do not fulfill the lust of our flesh.
- We cannot fight off our sinful desires without the Spirit of God working in us.
- What is very helpful to understand when Paul exhorts us to walk by the Spirit:
- Though in our Bibles it is translated the same, in **verse 16** it is *περιπατέω* and here in **verse 25** it is *στοιχέω*.
 - As I said, both words are walk but they are two different ways of walking.
 - In **verse 16** it is about walking around or to go about.
 - It is about our normal daily living of life.
 - In **verse 25** to walk means to walk in ranks, it is a military term.
 - In our context here it means to *keep in step with the Spirit*.
 - “One does this by fleeing sins the Spirit condemns in the Word, such as pride and envy (v. 26), and strenuously pursuing the righteousness the Spirit commands in the Word, such as meekness (6:1).”¹

WALKING BY THE SPIRIT (ROMANS 8)

- Galatians 5 gives us the command that we looked at last week. We know that our Christian life should be lived in the Spirit.
- We can then find the mechanics or the “how” of what it looks like in Romans 8. In other words, how does the Spirit empower us to live like this.
- Romans 8 gives the church one of the fullest explanations of what it means in practical ways to a truly Spirit-filled life.
- We have been delivered from the bondage of sin and into the freedom of Christ. We now need to now just know that, but also live according to it.

¹ Joel Beeke, *Reformed Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, 757.

The Spirit Changes Our Status Before God the Father

- **Romans 8:1-2** “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. [2] For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.”
 - As those who are in Christ, we are no longer condemned by the law. We truly have freedom from the power and penalty of sin.
 - The believer is no longer condemned before God but has true life.

The Spirit Changes Our Pattern of Living

- **Romans 8:4** “...so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”
 - Having the Holy Spirit now living in us does not negate our responsibility to obey God and follow His commands.
 - In fact, it now means that we have the power to do so. We now can obey because we have the Spirit living in us.

The Spirit Changes Our Pattern of Thinking

- **Romans 8:5-6** “For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. [6] For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace...”
 - One of the surest ways to tangibly see the effects of the Holy Spirit in your life is to notice where your affections are growing.
 - As we set our minds on the Spirit, we find true life and have an unexplainable peace.
 - As our minds begin to change with the Spirit, our heart will follow after.
 - The things that take our affections will not be from this world, but according to God’s will.
 - You can say that we will become what we think about.
 - **Colossians 3:1-2** “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. [2] Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.”
 - Our minds are set on things above, how we are to please God, are we walking in the Spirit, what affections are pulling on our hearts, so that we will be able to have our minds renewed.

- The mind is where the vast majority of your battles are going to take place with regards to your sanctification.
- The mind will come up with excuses and reasons why sin is good and acceptable.
- That is why we need the Word of God to be continually in the mind so that it is then reshaped according to the will of God.

The Spirit Enables us to Please God

- **Romans 8:8** "...and those who are in the flesh cannot please God."
 - Unbelievers are only and always in the flesh. They don't have the Spirit of God living and directing them.
 - Those without the Spirit don't do their works for God's glory nor are they done from faith in Christ.
 - After our conversion, as those who are born again, we now can truly please God with our whole lives.
 - Our obedience will never be perfect, but it is now acceptable before God because it is done from a desire to honor Him and obey Christ.
 - This idea is also seen in **Hebrews 11:6** "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."
 - **2 Corinthians 5:9** "Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him."
 - **Colossians 1:10** "...so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God..."

The Spirit Enables Us to Kill Sin

- **Romans 8:12-13** "So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh-- [13] for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live."
 - It is only through the working of God's Spirit that we are able to destroy the deeds of the flesh.
 - There is a cooperative relationship between the sovereignty of God and our own responsibility to kill sin.

- The Spirit supplies the wisdom and power while the believer actively engages in the fight against sin.
- As we walk by the Spirit, we don't ignore sin or allow it to have control or wait for God to take away our sinful desires.
- We actively fight that sin through the empowerment of the Spirit.

The Spirit Gives Us Assurance that We are God's

- **Romans 8:14-16** "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. [15] For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" [16] The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God..."
 - When we are submitting to the leading of the Spirit and walking in the power of the Spirit, we know that we are sons of God.
 - Our walk with the Lord is not about our personal experiences and subjective feelings; it is about being led away from sin and towards righteousness.
 - The more this happens, the more confidence we have that we are children of God because we become more and more like Christ.
- With all that the Spirit does for us and the truth that we must also actively obey His leading, the question is *am I able to hinder His work in me.*
- As we will see, we can't lose the Spirit of God but we can certainly put a strain on the fellowship that we are promised to enjoy with Him.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

- Before looking at how we grow in our walk and learn how we can keep in step with the Spirit's leading, there are some ways that the Bible says we can hinder the process.
- We must understand the Holy Spirit is permanent and indwelling all those who are born again.
- **Ephesians 1:13-14** "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, *you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise*, [14] who is given as a *pledge of our inheritance*, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."
 - *You were sealed*, is a passive verb. You didn't seal yourself, but you did believe the message.

- That means the prerequisite to being sealed is believing the message of truth, the gospel of salvation.
- This means that you can encourage your own heart that when you believed the message, you were baptized with the Spirit and sealed with the same Spirit.
- **John 14:16-17** “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, *that He may be with you forever*; [17] that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.”
- Even though we sin, the Holy Spirit does not leave us; though at times the fellowship is broken.

Sins against the Holy Spirit²

- When we oppose the Holy Spirit, we are opposing the will of God. It is not fully clear how each of these fit into the overall picture, but they all are characteristic of a believer choosing to sin rather than choosing to submit to God.
- We can **grieve** the Holy Spirit.
 - **Ephesians 4:30** “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”
 - Grieve means *to cause severe mental or emotional distress, vex, irritate, offend, insult*.³
 - In this context from Ephesians, Paul is talking about our words. When our words are unwholesome it grieves the Holy Spirit.
 - When we choose to not speak life, love, and words that glorify God; it offends the Holy Spirit.
- We can **lie** to the Holy Spirit.
 - **Acts 5:3** “But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?’”
 - “The sin was that of deceit against the Holy Spirit: namely, believing that no one within the believing community would know of the deceit. Peter says it was not a deceit against the community, but to lie to or falsify the activity of the Holy Spirit (v. 3), which means that they

² Only the list was taken from John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 341.

³ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 604.

falsify the actions of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is so identified with the church that what is done against it or the apostles (see 5:12–13) is also done against the Spirit (9:4).”⁴

- We can **test** the Holy Spirit.
 - **Acts 5:9** “Then Peter said to her, ‘Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out as well.’”
 - “But he said that they *tempted* the Spirit, because they had cunningly packed their fraud, as if the Spirit of God were not the knower of the hearts.”⁵
- We can **neglect** the Holy Spirit.
 - While this is not a specific biblical category, we can neglect the Holy Spirit and His sanctifying work through either our own unbelief or our own attempt to work out our growth in our own strength (legalism).
 - This is the idea that Paul presents in **Galatians 5:4** “You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.”
 - When believers seek to either live by the law for growth in holiness or keep the law for any kind of further justification, they have been *severed from Christ*.
 - In effect, they have *fallen from grace*.
 - This does not mean that they have lost their salvation.
 - Rather, what Paul is pointing out is that those who seek their justification through the law they are no longer resting in the finished work of Christ.
 - They have, in effect, placed themselves outside the sphere of grace and no longer have the blessing of assurance or benefits of grace.
 - Paul is writing to churches; he fully believes them to be born again. But they are facing temptation to go back to the law or start to adhere to some of the law in order for their justification to be real.
 - “Whoever wants to have a half-Christ, loses the whole.”⁶

⁴ Lee Martin McDonald, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2004), 45.

⁵ John Calvin and Henry Beveridge, *Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 202.

⁶ John Calvin, *Galatians*, Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries, 11.93.

- “Paul’s whole purpose in writing this passage was to issue a wake-up call to those members of the Galatian churches who were being tempted to forsake the evangelical message Paul had proclaimed in favor of another gospel of that legal obedience.”⁷
- We can **quench** the Holy Spirit.
 - **1 Thessalonians 5:19** “Do not quench the Spirit...”
 - Quench means to *stifle, suppress*.⁸
 - We have already covered many of the ways that the Holy Spirit works, but the one in which He intimately works in the lives of believers is through progressive sanctification.
 - Therefore, to quench the Spirit is to stifle or suppress His work in you with regards to your growth in maturity and holiness.
 - This happens when we choose to misinterpret Scripture, when we trust in our own ideas and intellect rather than the Spirit, when we are prideful or overconfident that we are able to do something in our own strength.
 - In other words, to quench the Spirit is to walk according to the old man, not according to the power of the Spirit.
- While we can act against the Spirit of God, He does not leave us. Since the Holy Spirit is the 3rd person of the Triune God, we can come back to Him just like we do when we sin against God the Father or God the Son.
- **1 John 1:9** “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
- **Acts 3:19** “Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...”
- Confession and repentance and then we show that by then submitting to Him and walking in the Spirit so that we are no longer controlled by those sinful desires / habits.
- This is why it’s important to keep a short account of sin in your life.
- When the Spirit brings something up that you have been harboring in your heart or against someone else, we must confess that as sin to God and then repent of it.

⁷ Timothy George, *Galatians*, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 359.

⁸ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 917.

- There are times in life when we may “feel” or it may “seem” that we are far away from the Spirit; but He hasn’t moved.
- That’s why it’s important to keep being filled with the Spirit throughout your entire Christian walk.

HOW DOES HE ACCOMPLISH THIS IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER?

- Believers must be continually filled with the Holy Spirit so that they are able to walk in the Spirit, be led by the Spirit and keep in step with the Spirit.
- As we are going to discuss throughout the next several classes, the Holy Spirit fills the believer, not for salvation but for their continued walk and growth, *primarily through the Word of God*.
- **Colossians 3:16** “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”
- **Ephesians 5:18** “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit...”
 - Both Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:18 give us a whole and clear picture. To be Spirit filled *is* to be Word filled.
- **Psalms 119:11** “Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You.”
- While the other means of grace the Lord gives us are important, we can’t find truth from for us outside of the Scriptures.
 - This truth gives us wisdom to teach and admonish one another. It also gives us the guardrails for what is sin and what is righteousness as we live for God’s glory.
- Here is why we have such a high focus and emphasis on God’s Word in our church:
- “The church’s de-emphasis of the Holy Spirit’s working through the Word has also led to a pronounced lack of spiritual discernment. One could cite many symptoms of this deficiency, but six basic ones come to mind immediately. **First**, there has been a general weakening of doctrinal clarity and conviction within the church. Many Christians no longer think biblically and theologically, and they consider it wrong and unloving to be dogmatic, even on the most basic doctrines such as the inerrancy of Scripture and the definition of the gospel. **Second**, much of the church is no longer antithetical in its thinking. It does not make sharp distinctions between true and false, right and wrong, but instead embraces subjectivity, relativity, and pragmatism. **Third**, image and influence

have replaced the proclamation of the truth as the essence of evangelization. The church is reluctant to risk offending unbelievers with a clear, convicting gospel message. Instead, it relies on marketing philosophy to present a seeker-friendly message that focuses on people's "felt needs." **Fourth**, the church has ceased valuing sound hermeneutics. Many preachers no longer work diligently at the careful and accurate interpretation of the Word. They have substituted anecdotes, psychology, and subjectivity for the objective exposition of Scripture. **Fifth**, the church has mostly ceased exercising church discipline against those members who persist in sin and error. As a result, the world's philosophy and practice enters the church and it stops being distinct from the surrounding pagan culture. **Sixth**, all of the preceding features produce and are characteristic of a spiritually immature church. The self-absorbed church, preoccupied with attaining personal comfort, success, and achieving man-centered solutions to life's problems, possesses a superficial faith that cannot discern between good and evil, or truth and error."⁹

- The main means that you and I are going to grow in the Lord, mature in our walk with Him, live being filled with the Spirit is through the reading, studying, listening to, being taught and teaching of God's Word.
- The effects of a Word-less church are being seen more and more in the life of the believers who attend those churches.
- Charles Spurgeon argued that "the devil has seldom done a cleverer thing than hinting to the church that part of their mission is to provide entertainment for the people."
 - Spurgeon lived from 1834 – 1892, dying at 57 years old.
- All of this to answer why the church is in the state that it is in...they have failed to answer biblically the question *how should we then live* and have looked to the culture for answers.
- There is a vicious loop that happens. As churches start to decline, they want to attract more people and look to where people go.
 - They see them go to the movies, to the country clubs, to fairs and other events. So the church believes that this is how they get people into the doors and adopt these programs.
 - What has happened because the church has left the sufficiency of the Word of God?

⁹ John F. MacArthur Jr., *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 2002), 192.

- “3 out of 4 churches are in decline...every year about 4000 churches are planted and about 3700 churches close and that number is on the rise.”¹⁰
- If you wonder why our focus is on the Word of God and discipleship, this is exactly why. There are quantifiable proofs that show when a church leaves the consistent preaching / teaching of God’s Word, does not have a culture of discipleship and community based upon God’s Word, it will fail.
- If you remember from last week, I had put my diagram of what it means to walk in the Spirit. As you can see, if Scripture and truth are absent in the life of the believer, there is going to be no spiritual growth.
 - With no growth means limited discernment and a potentially compromised life.
- Union with Christ (salvation) → Baptism and Indwelling of the Spirit → **Scripture / Truth** → Spirit's illumination, conviction & application of truth / Scripture → Being filled with and under the control of Spirit → Believer Obeys Through the Power of the Spirit → Mortification / Killing Sin (put-off) + Pursuit of Righteousness (put-on) → Fruit of the Spirit / Christlikeness → Progressive Sanctification.

A word about *the Word*

- **2 Timothy 3:16-17** “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; [17] **so that** the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”
- This is why a steady diet of God’s Word is necessary in the Christian’s life.
- Scripture (God’s Word) is inspired by God:
 - Θεόπνευστος; θεος (theos) meaning God & πνευστος (noostos) meaning breath or breathe.
 - This means we can say that Scripture is the very breath of God to mankind.
- Therefore, in order for God’s people to operate how God desires they must know what He has said. If this is not happening, believers will not be:
 - **Adequate:** being well fitted for some function, *complete, capable, proficient*¹¹
 - **Equipped for every good work:** to make ready for service, *equip, furnish*¹²

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 136.

¹² Ibid., 346.

- Without God’s Word, His people are not capable nor ready for the service which God desires for them. This is why churches who fall away from God’s Word will not produce God’s results.
- **1 Peter 1:10-11** “As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, [11] seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.”
 - “To the prophets *it was revealed* that in predicting the sufferings of Christ *they were not serving themselves* but a later generation of believers. Their careful study of all the evidence was not in itself adequate to the task. Insight must be *revealed*. Technical exegesis of Scripture may prepare the way for understanding, but in the final analysis it is the Spirit of God who reveals the real meaning and significance of biblical truth. While the prophets did not learn the exact “time and circumstances” when their message would be fulfilled, they did understand in a general way that it belonged to a later generation.”¹³
 - Unbelievers are not able to rightly understand nor are they able to embrace spiritual truth without the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit.
 - **1 Corinthians 2:14** “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”
 - **Matthew 16:16-17** “Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ [17] And Jesus said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.’”
 - The Holy Spirit and the Word of God work together in the heart of the believer so that their can be growth in holiness and maturity in the walk with the Lord.
 - “It should be our delight to “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest” the doctrines of grace. Surely it must be a crime of crimes to be living in utter neglect of a salvation that gained the attentive mind of Daniel and Isaiah and Ezekiel.”¹⁴
- **2 Peter 1:19-21** “So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. [20] But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own

¹³ Robert H. Mounce, *A Living Hope: A Commentary on 1 and 2 Peter* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005), 16–17.

¹⁴ Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon Commentary: 1 Peter*, ed. Elliot Ritzema and Jessi Strong, Spurgeon Commentary Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 1 Pe 1:11.

interpretation, [21] for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

- You can clearly read that it was men of God writing and speaking, but it was the Holy Spirit who was moving them along to do so.
- “Both human beings and God were fully involved in the process of inspiration. The personality and gifts of the human authors were not squelched or suppressed. We can detect their different literary styles even today. And yet the words they spoke do not cancel out the truth that they spoke the word of God. Concursus means that both God and human beings contributed to the prophetic word. Ultimately, however, and most significantly, these human words are God’s words. The prophets were “carried along by the Holy Spirit.”¹⁵
- The verb used for *moved* is a passive verb. These men who wrote the Scriptures were not acting out of their own volition, but from God’s power.
- **Jude 1:3** “Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.”
 - There are no other words coming from God which are not already revealed in the Bible.
 - Jude says that the faith (the gospel of Jesus Christ) was *once for all handed down to the saints*.
 - “The gospel of Jesus Christ has received its full explication through the apostles. From statements like these early Christians rightly concluded that the canon of Scripture should be restricted to those early writings that explicated the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”¹⁶
 - **Hebrews 1:1-2** “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, [2] in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.”
- There are no more words or ideas coming from God. There are no more prophets, Apostles, or people authorized to write Scripture.
- God has spoken, we have His Word, and we must pay attention.
- Why is this important to being filled with the Spirit?

¹⁵ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, vol. 37, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 324.

¹⁶ Ibid., 436.

- This is where you may have heard the term *Spiritual Disciplines* or *Spiritual Formation*.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES IN THE BELIEVER'S LIFE

- “Ours is an undisciplined age. The old disciplines are breaking down...Above all, the discipline of divine grace is derided as legalism or is entirely unknown to a generation that is largely illiterate in the Scriptures. We need the rugged strength of Christian character that can come only from discipline.”¹⁷

What are spiritual disciplines for the Christian life?

- “...those practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are the habits of devotion and experiential Christianity that have been practiced by the people of God since biblical times.”¹⁸
- In the Christian life, spiritual disciplines without direction can seem to be a grinding work or an exhaustive labor.
- It is not just about reading the Bible or having fellowship or a consistent prayer time, but also about where all of that is taking you in your walk with the Lord.
- This means that spiritual disciplines are what you do, not who you are or what your heart produces.
- While disciplines are about what you are doing, they are not just doing for the sake of doing...they are doing for the sake of becoming.
 - For example, reading your Bible is a discipline, but joy is not. Joy is something that you and I experience, not something that we do.
 - But they are interconnected, you may desire to grow in joy so you read your Bible, you have fellowship with other believers, you pray, fast, etc.
 - Your joy will be cultivated because of your spiritual disciplines. If you are spiritually passive and don't put any effort into cultivating joy, joy should not be expected.
- A very important point that is inevitably missed is that disciplines are not the end, but the means.

¹⁷ V. Raymond Edman quoted in Donald Whitney's *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 1.

¹⁸ Donald Whitney's *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 4.

- “The end – that is – the purpose of practicing the disciplines is godliness...[godliness is defined] as both closeness to Christ and conformity to Christ, a conformity to both the heart of Christ and the life of Christ. This Christlikeness is the goal, the reason we should practice the disciplines.”¹⁹
- **1 Timothy 4:7-8** “But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, *discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness*; [8] for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.”
- This is the overall purpose of our spiritual disciplines. Not just for the sake of doing the discipline, but for the sake of growing in godliness (Christlikeness).
- God grows believers through their diligent use of the means that He has provided. While we put in the effort, it is the Spirit who creates the growth.
- There are three ways the Bible points to that God will use to conform us into the image of Christ.²⁰
- The Lord will use other people in our life:
 - **Proverbs 27:17** “Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”
- He uses what happens to us in our life:
 - **Romans 8:28** “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”
- His final tool is that of spiritual disciplines.
 - While the first two largely depend upon God, the final one we have much more freedom over. There are times that we can’t predict who is going to come crashing into our lives or what event is going to happen in our life.
 - But, we can choose to pray each day, seek out fellowship, and other means.
- We do not grow as Christians because we strive harder and harder in our own strength. We also don’t grow because we passively sit around waiting for the Holy Spirit to do something when we do nothing.
- It is true growth in a believer when, through God’s grace, he seeks God by actively pursuing obedience through the Scriptures by faith.

¹⁹ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 9.

²⁰ Ibid., 10-11.

How Should We Then Live?

The Logical Progression of Weeks 1-5

These are not five independent studies. Each lesson intentionally builds on the previous one and moves us toward a biblical understanding of sanctification, walking in the Spirit, and spiritual growth.

Week 1 - Historical Survey

Key Question: How has the church answered the question?

Many wrong answers have appeared: legalism, emotionalism, externalism, mysticism, and mere intellectualism. We need a biblical framework.

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Week 2 - Purpose of the Christian Life

Key Question: What is the goal?

God saved us for Christlikeness, transformation, maturity, service, and ultimately His glory.

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Week 3 - Walking in the Spirit Part 1

Key Question: Who makes growth possible?

The Holy Spirit was promised, given, indwells every believer, and empowers Christian living.

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Week 4 - Walking in the Spirit Part 2

Key Question: What does walking in the Spirit mean?

Spirit-empowered obedience through Scripture. Not passivity, emotionalism, or legalistic self-effort.

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Week 5 - Walking in the Spirit Part 3

Key Question: How does the Spirit practically produce growth?

Romans 8, the Word of God, Spirit-filled living, mortification of sin, and spiritual disciplines as God's appointed means of growth.

BIG IDEA

Purpose → Power → Definition → Practice

God saved us to become like Christ. The Holy Spirit empowers that transformation. Walking in the Spirit is the biblical description of that transformation. The Spirit accomplishes this work primarily through the Word of God and the means of grace, producing progressive sanctification and increasing Christlikeness.