



**Truth Seekers  
Fellowship**

Equipping The Faithful To Be Fruitful

**PHASE 3**

MilktoMeat Book 5

# Living THE LIFE Part 01 Empowered In The Spirit

AWARE > ALIVE > AWAKE > FREE > FAITHFUL > FRUITFUL



# **LIVING THE LIFE**

## Part 1: Empowered In The Spirit

“I am The Way, The Truth and **The Life**;

No one comes to the Father

except through me.”

Jesus the Messiah

[ John 14:6 ]

| AWARE | ALIVE | AWAKE | FREE | **FAITHFUL** | FRUITFUL |

## **Living The Life | Part 1: Empowered In The Spirit**

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[www.tsfmemphis.org](http://www.tsfmemphis.org)

email: [connect@tsfmemphis.org](mailto:connect@tsfmemphis.org)

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*For*  
**Tom Murray**  
*who taught us the importance of*  
*teaching the truth, in the right order, at the right time.*

*And many thanks to*  
**all our students over the years**  
*who have served as our*  
*editors, encouragers and supporters.*

**CHRIST** we proclaim  
by warning and teaching all people with all wisdom  
so that we may present every person mature in Christ.  
Toward this goal we also labor,  
struggling according to His power  
that powerfully works in us.  
| Colossians 1:28-29 |

The MilktoMeat Map		
<b>Phase 1</b> <b>Discovering The Way</b>	<i>1. Recovering The Master Story</i>	<b>Aware</b>
	<i>2. Enlightened By The Gospel</i>	<b>Alive</b>
<b>Phase 2</b> <b>Walking In The Truth</b>	<i>3. Realizing Your New Identity in Christ</i>	<b>Awake</b>
	<i>4. Rooted And Growing In Christ</i>	<b>Free</b>
<b>Phase 3</b> <b>Living The Life</b>	<i>5. Empowered In The Spirit</i>	<b>Faithful</b>
	<i>6. Serving As The Body Of Christ</i>	<b>Fruitful</b>

**Contents:**

<b>1. Who Is The Holy Spirit And What Is He Doing?</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1 Where Is The Holy Spirit Leading Us?	12
1.2 Who Is The Holy Spirit And What Is His Mission?	16
1.3 How Did the Holy Spirit Work in Jesus' Life and How Does He Work in Ours?	19
1.4 How Do We Visualize The Holy Spirit In Us?	22
<b>2. How Do We Live by The Holy Spirit?</b>	<b>25</b>
2.1 How Have We Been Set Free in Christ Through The Spirit?	26
2.2 How Are We Led By The Holy Spirit?	31
2.3 What Is The Fruit Of The Spirit?	33
<b>3. What Are The Five Growth Ministries Of The Holy Spirit?</b>	<b>37</b>
3.1 How Does The Holy Spirit Help Us To Grow To Maturity?	38
3.2 What Is The Process Of Spiritual Growth?	44
3.3 Seeing The Glory Of The Lord Through The Spirit.	47
<b>4. What Are Spiritual Exercises?</b>	<b>49</b>
4.1 What Habits Did Jesus Practice?	50
4.2 What Are Spiritual Exercises And How Do They Work?	53
4.3 Some Practical Advice On The Exercises	55
4.4 How Do We Avoid The Trap Of Legalism?	56
4.5 How Do We Implement All Of This?	59

<b>5. What Are The Three Foundational Exercises?</b>	<b>63</b>
5.1 Spiritual Exercise 1: Hearing And Seeing (Receiving)	64
5.2 Spiritual Exercise 2: Praying (Responding)	67
5.3 Spiritual Exercise 3: Serving (Following)	70
5.4 How Do We Follow The Example Of The Lord Jesus?	73
 <b>6. What Are Some Supporting Spiritual Practices And Attitudes?</b>	 <b>75</b>
6.1 Exercises/Attitudes To Support Hearing And Seeing	76
6.2 Exercises/Attitudes To Support Prayer	79
6.3 Exercises/Attitudes To Support Service	82
6.4 How Can We Implement The Exercises Practically?	85
 <b>7. How Can We Be Sure We Are Faith-Full And Fruitful?</b>	 <b>87</b>
7.1 What Has Father God Granted Us And How Do We Respond?	88
7.2 How Do We Partake Of The Divine Nature?	91
7.3 What Do We “Add To” Our Faith?	94
7.4 What Is The Outcome?	97

## Introduction to MilktoMeat

**“CHRIST** we proclaim,  
warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom,  
*so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.”*

~ COLOSSIANS 1:28 ~

### Who is This Study For?

We have designed this study around a simple idea: *these are the truths that we wished someone had taught us as new believers, new followers of Jesus.*

- » If you are a new follower of Jesus, or
- » If you have never been trained how to follow Jesus, or
- » If you want to learn how to train others to follow Jesus...

*then you are PERFECT for this study.*

**\*This study follows our first Phase of workbooks, Discovering The Way. Since the sequence is central to this study, we would highly recommend doing Phase 1 first if you have not already. You can order that set and find out more at [www.tsfnmemphis.org/milktomeat](http://www.tsfnmemphis.org/milktomeat).**

### What is The Story Behind MilktoMeat?

*Do you want to grow spiritually but aren't sure where to start or what will work? For over twenty years we have been developing and refining MilktoMeat based upon what makes a difference in people's lives. Many men and women, from various walks of life, ages, and backgrounds have been transformed while going through this study. This study is an invitation to experience how Father God working in Jesus Christ through the power and presence of His Holy Spirit will transform You.*

We believe that this is a powerful tool and resource for anyone who wants to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). We pray that this study will become a means for you to connect more deeply with Father God's love and purposes for you in Christ so that you *make your life's journey worthy of your destination!*



Tom Murray, the founder of Truth Seekers Fellowship, began to follow Jesus in his late twenties. At that point, he was what all new followers of Jesus are: *a blank sheet of paper*. Although Tom was hungry and willing to pursue spiritual growth, he found that his early years as a student of Jesus were not as fulfilling and productive as they could have been. Tom got bits and pieces of important truth and practices, but he had no one to lead him and train him in a logical and sequential way with the goal of spiritual maturity in sight.

After many years of searching, learning, and growing through trial and error, Tom decided to put together a study that would, “*teach others what I wish older, more mature Christians had taught me as a new believer*.” This study and curriculum became MilktoMeat. The guiding principle behind all of MilktoMeat is simple: *teaching the truth in the right order at the right time*.

## What are Our Core Commitments?

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» **Bible Based** | The Bible has been given to us by God to instruct us in His Ways and give us hope. This study is **Bible Based** because we are confident that the Message of the Bible (the Written Word) gives us hope by guiding us to Jesus Christ.

**Romans 15:4** For everything that was written in former times was written for our instruction, so that through endurance and through encouragement of the Scriptures *we may have hope*.

**2 Timothy 3:14–15** But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you, and you know that from childhood you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

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» **Christ Focused** | Jesus Christ is the Creator, Savior, and King of all creation and therefore the ONLY Way that leads us to the One True God. Therefore, this study is **Christ Focused** because we are confident that He is Creator, Savior, and King of all Creation and therefore central to all things:

**Hebrews 12:1–2** ...Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that lay before Him endured a cross and despised the shame and has sat down at the right hand of God's throne.

» **Life Transforming** | Father God Works in Christ His Son through the Holy Spirit to transform our lives. When anyone is presented with the truth and goodness of God in the glory of Jesus Christ, that person will be affected. The Lord-God has revealed Himself to us in His Written Word—*The Bible*—and this Word points us to the Living Word—*Our Savior and Lord Jesus*—so that we can see Him. We are confident that Father God has given us His Word and is working in Christ through His Spirit to set free, heal, and transform anyone who is willing to turn from their old way of life and to trust and follow Jesus Christ who leads us in *the way of true life*.

**2 Corinthians 3:17–18**      Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 3:18 We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.

## **What is the Larger Structure of MilktoMeat?**

MilktoMeat is divided into three Phases: 1) Discovering the Way, 2) Walking in the Truth and 3) Living the Life. Each of these Phases consist of two 7 Session study units. These units are designed to lead you in the process of Spiritual Transformation that takes place as you grow in your relationship with Father God in Christ.

### » **Phase 1 | Discovering the Way**

In this first phase, our goal is *to build a frame of reference* for life by recovering The Master Story of the Bible. This Master Story sets the context for understanding The Gospel—the Good News about Jesus and The Kingdom which enlightens our lives. We focus on the three core life questions: 1) *Where have we come from?* 2) *Why are we here?* And 3) *How will our lives turn out?* We then turn to explore the major Gospel Questions: 1) Why Did God Create Us? 2) What Went Wrong? 3) What Did God Do? 4) What is God Doing? 5) What will God Do? and 6) How Should We Respond? Our Father God working in Christ through The Spirit has provided answers to these questions that give us the one thing that we need more than anything else: **HOPE**. This phase is divided into two seven-session workbooks: *Recovering the Master Story* and *Enlightened by the Gospel*

## » Phase 2 | Walking in The Truth

In our second phase, we explore what it means to trust and follow Jesus ALONE as our only Savior. We focus on our **new identity** and **position** in Christ and how this new reality fulfills our need for 1) *Security*, 2) *Significance* and 3) *Fulfillment* as people created in the image and likeness of God. We also explore issues related to The Great Spiritual War in which we find ourselves, broken and wounded by sin, but now being transformed to be like Jesus. Our lives are journeys of FAITH; we are all **trusting** someone to show us The Way. This phase is divided into two seven-session workbooks: *Realizing Your New Identity in Christ* and *Rooted and Growing in Christ*

## » Phase 3 | Living the Life

In our final phase, we consider what it means to be a life-long disciple/student/apprentice of Jesus. We focus on the significant role everyone “in Christ” has. “In Christ” we are each gifted and empowered to serve *as* the Body of Christ (The Church) *in* the World where Jesus is leading His mission to seek and save those who are spiritually lost, dead, and enslaved in the Dominion of Darkness. God is love. As we come to know Jesus Christ truly, following Him wherever He may lead, we too become people characterized by His self-sacrificial **LOVE**. This phase is divided into two seven-session studies: *Empowered In The Spirit* and *Serving as The Body of Christ*.

# Session 1

## Who Is The Holy Spirit And What Is He Doing?

**Core Truth:** The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity. He has been sent to us by Father God and the Lord Jesus to lead us to live by faith in Christ and fill us with His love.

**To Remember:** “For the law of the life-giving Spirit in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.” [Romans 8:2]

**Objective:** Many believers have never been taught a biblical view of the Holy Spirit. Continuing on from the truths we learned in Phase 2, we will see how the Spirit empowers us and gifts us to live in a way that is pleasing to Father God and so be the Body of Christ—The Church

**Prayer:** *Father God, thank You for all the blessings you have given me in Christ. Thank you for sending your Holy Spirit to live within me and empower me to live a whole new way of life. Amen.*

## WORDwork | Day 1

### 1.1 Where Is The Holy Spirit Leading Us?

#### Romans 8:1–11

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 8:2 For the law of the life-giving Spirit in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. 8:3 For God achieved what the law could not do because it was weakened through the flesh. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and concerning sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 8:4 so that the righteous requirement of the law may be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

8:5 For those who live according to the flesh have their outlook [*mind-set*] shaped by the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit have their outlook [*mind-set*] shaped by the things of the Spirit. 8:6 For the outlook [*mind-set*] of the flesh is death, but the outlook [*mind-set*] of the Spirit is life and peace, 8:7 because the outlook [*mind-set*] of the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to the law of God, nor is it able to do so. 8:8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

8:9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, this person does not belong to him. 8:10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is your life because of righteousness. 8:11 Moreover if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will also make your mortal bodies alive through his Spirit who lives in you.

? 01 Based on what you know, what does Paul mean by “no condemnation” for those who are “In Christ”?

? 02 What has set us free from the “law of sin and death”?

- ? 03     How did Father God accomplish what the Law could not do?
- ? 04     According to 8:5-6 what are the two ways we can have our outlook/  
mind-set shaped?
- ? 05     According to 8:9, what does it mean to be “in the Spirit”?

**Welcome to Phase 3!** *You have traveled quite a ways to get here and you should enjoy your accomplishment!* In this final Phase of MilktoMeat, we are going to be focusing on the Holy Spirit and His work *in us* and *through us* that unites us and empowers us as the Body of Christ—The Church. In this first week, we are going to be reviewing some truths that we have covered before, but expand them and look a little deeper into them. The truths relating to the Holy Spirit are so important for you to understand and *realize* in your day-to-day journey and so we want to make sure they are deeply rooted in your mind-set.

We begin in Romans 8:1 where Paul makes one of the most incredible statements in all the Scriptures: ***“There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!”*** Because of all that Jesus Christ has done *for* us and *to* us, Father God has accepted us and welcomed us into His eternal fellowship; We are accepted, not condemned!

Even more than that, notice that “the law of life giving spirit in Christ Jesus has **set you free** from the law of sin and death.” In this section of Romans, Paul emphasizes the word “law” and he uses it in two different senses. First, he uses the term “law” to refer *specifically* to God’s written instruction and commandments, specifically all the instructions (*Torah*) given to Moses at Sinai.

But here in 8:1-4 Paul is using the term “law” in the *general* sense of a *principle*—a fundamental truth stating what something is or the way something works. You can see this as he contrasts the “law of the life giving Spirit” and the “law of Sin and Death.”

Paul is making the case that the “written law” cannot *save* us or *empower* us to do what it requires. In fact, when we try to “keep” it, the sin that lives with us is empowered to make us do exactly what we don’t want to do. In order to live in a way that is pleasing to Father God, we need another “law”—*principle*—to live by.

We have summarized these *laws/principles* in this way:

» **The Law/Principle of Sin and Death:**

*If I try to keep the Law (Legalism, self-salvation) in order to be pleasing to God, the Sin that dwells within me will come alive producing in my evil and corrupt desires that will lead to sinful actions.*

» **The Law/Principle of the Life-Giving Spirit:**

*If I follow the Spirit as He leads me to follow Christ by faith (trust), He will empower my desire for good which will lead to living in a way that is pleasing to Father God.*

Notice again what Paul goes on to say: *God has sent Jesus to do for us what we could not do for ourselves.* At the Cross, Jesus fully *exposed* and *judged* sin (*the reality and power of sin*) in order to break its power. We discussed this in some detail in the last workbook, *Rooted and Growing in Christ*.

We also made the case that what the Spirit now enables us to do is **fulfill** the ONE requirement of all the Law: LOVE.

**Romans 13:8-10** “Owe no one anything, except to love one another, **for the one who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law** ... Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

In 8:4, Paul says that the requirements of the Law will be “**fulfilled**” in us; he does not say that the requirements may be “kept” or “obeyed” or “done” by us—all the normal activities that usually define what we do with the Law. The one requirement is “*fulfilled*” in us. In other words, the Life Giving Spirit is going to work this out in our lives. As the Spirit does His work in us and we follow Him, the actual things that God’s Law/Instruction requires will be *fulfilled*—lived out in our lives, our lives will be FILLED by love!

All of this becomes true of us when we “*walk according to the Spirit*.” To walk here simply means “to live our lives”—it is what we do on a daily basis. Again, we discussed this at some detail in Phase 2 Walking in the Truth. Now we are going to push into that a littler further in the coming sessions and talk about specifics things we can do each and everyday to realize this “*walking in the Spirit*.”

In 8:5-8, Paul gives us two very different *ways of life*—one is shaped by the Flesh, the other is shaped by the Spirit. One leads to death; the other leads to life. We can summarize these *ways*, this way:

» **Those who live according to the FLESH:**

*Their Mindset is shaped by the things (thought and desires) of the flesh which is hostile to God and leads to death.*

**» Those who live according to the SPIRIT:**

*Their mindset is shaped by the things (thoughts and desires) of Spirit which is at peace with God and leads to life.*

The word that is translated “outlook” or “mindset” in these verses, is one that refers to our *attitude* that is produced by a certain way of thinking and planning. In part, this mindset is part of your worldview—the way you see yourself and the world. If we could summarize the difference in these two mindsets very simply (*maybe overly simple*) the mindset of the Flesh keeps us *focused on ourselves* and our own, unredeemed desires. The mindset of the Spirit focuses us on Christ and His desires. *Those whose mindset are shaped by the things of the flesh cannot please Father God.*

Paul gives us great news in 8:9-11: if we are “in Christ,” then Christ is IN us and His Spirit is our life! The presence of the Holy Spirit in us sets us free from the claims and power of the flesh and the sin that dwells there. If you think back to our last unit, we made the case that Paul sees our physical bodies as the “headquarters” for the power of sin that still dwells in us. That is why in 8:10 he says, “our bodies are dead because of sin.” In 8:11 he goes on to tell us that the same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead is the same Spirit who lives in us now to make us *spiritually alive*! One day - *on the day of resurrection* - even our “mortal bodies” will be made alive again!

Paul summarizes all this in this way:

**Romans 8:12** So then, brothers and sisters, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh 8:13 (for if you live according to the flesh, you will die), but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live.

We have already discussed how we “put to death” the deeds of the body in Phase 2 in our discussion of “putting on the new person In Christ.” In this unit, we will push a little further into what it means to LIVE according to the Spirit.



A lot of what we discussed today should be familiar to you. Take a minute and think about what was NEW to you or hit you in a fresh way. Do you basically understand the difference in the “Way of the Flesh” and the “Way of the Spirit”?



## WORDwork | Day 2

### 1.2 **Who Is The Holy Spirit And What Is His Mission?**

This session should look familiar to you—we covered the same material in the last workbook, *Rooted and Growing In Christ*. Since it is very important to understand who the Holy Spirit is and what He is here to do *in* us and *to* us and *through* us, we want to go over some of this material again.

#### 1.2.1 **The Holy Spirit Is A Member Of The Trinity**

The Holy Spirit is the third member of the Trinity along with the Father and the Son. In some of Jesus final words of instruction to the disciples while He was on earth He said:

**Matthew 28:18-20** [Jesus said, ] “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go now and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to do all that I commanded you. And now remember, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Here Jesus is linking the Spirit with Himself and the Father as the fellowship, the union, the relationship that Jesus’ followers will be baptized - immersed- and welcomed into.

#### 1.2.2 **The Holy Spirit Is A Person, Not An Impersonal Force Or Power**

The Holy Spirit is a person. In the New Testament, He is referred to as a “He” not as an “it.” This is important to understand. The Spirit is not an impersonal force but a person who has come to lead us to Jesus and to unite us with the living reality of the Trinity as He takes up His home within us:

**John 14:16-18** “[Now] I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever - 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it does not see him or know him. But you know him, because he resides with you and will be in you. 18 “I will not abandon you as orphans, I will come to you ...”

In these verses, the Holy Spirit is referred to as the Advocate. This word is difficult to translate to English. The translations have Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Strengtheners, Standby, Friend, etc. Advocate is a good word. It speaks about a person who takes up a cause, gives witness to the cause, and tries to get other

people on board with the cause. The Holy Spirit is Jesus' Advocate and ours. He comes to us to get us "on board" with Jesus' Way and then supports us as we follow The Way.

### 1.2.3 **The Holy Spirit Is The Spirit of Truth**

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. Take note of John 14:17 again. He is the ultimate witness to The Truth - The Truth that is revealed in Christ Jesus. Because of this He is here to guide us to and in truth:

**John 16:13-15** But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. For he will not speak on his own authority, but will speak whatever he hears, and will tell you what is to come. 14 He will glorify me, because he will receive from me what is mine and will tell it to you. 15 Everything that the Father has is mine; that is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what is mine and will tell it to you.

### 1.2.4 **The Holy Spirit Is Here To Lead Us To Christ**

**John 15:26-27** When the Advocate comes, whom I will send you from the Father the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father - he will testify about me, 27 and you also will testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.

The Holy Spirit is not here to draw attention to Himself; He is here to testify, speak about, give witness, and draw people to Jesus. Back in John 16:14 we heard Jesus say that the Spirit would *glorify* Him—praise Him, lift Him up for others to see, show that Jesus is worthy of praise. This Spirit also empowers us to speak about Christ Jesus, lifting Him up so that others may see His glory.

### 1.2.5 **The Holy Spirit Is The Power of The Lord's Transforming Work**

**Romans 15:13** Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe in him, so that you may abound in hope *by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

**2 Corinthians 3:17-18** Now the **Lord (Jesus) is the Spirit**, and where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom. 3:18 And we all, with unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord (as in a reflection), are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, *which is from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

**Ephesians 3:16** I pray that according to the wealth of his glory he may grant you to be ***strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner person...***

In all of these passages above, we see that the Holy Spirit is the power of God made available to us for all “life and godliness.” The Holy Spirit has been given to us to empower us to be people of hope, faith and love. We should be absolutely overwhelmed by the reality that the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead (see Romans 1:4) now dwells within us and we are in Christ!

As Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians above, the Spirit is here to bring us to freedom. The Spirit is here to bring about our *transformation*—to be more like the Lord Jesus degree by degree. All of this is given to us by the Lord Jesus who makes His presence real with and within us by The Spirit.



Is there anything new that you learned about the Spirit today?  
If so what and how does it change the way you think about your relationship with Father God in Christ?

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**WORDwork | Day 3****1.3 How Did the Holy Spirit Work in Jesus' Life and How Does He Work in Ours?**

Today we are going to return to a topic we have previously covered. It is vitally important that you see how the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of our Lord Jesus is a model for His work in our lives.

Before you read through these passages, a type of question that often comes up in this context is, “Weren’t Jesus and the Holy Spirit always united, always ‘one’? So how could Jesus be ‘filled’ with the Holy Spirit?” That is a good question. The only way I know to answer it is to say that when the Eternal Son—a member of the Trinity—became human, *He lived His life as a human in exactly the same way we have to live our lives as humans*. Even though Jesus is God, He did not depend on His own divine attributes to live His earthly life; instead, He trusted His Father and entrusted Himself to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

This is an important truth and here is why: *we are called to follow the example of Jesus and imitate His way of life. If He used His own divine “rights” and power, we could not be expected to follow Him*. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul says, “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.” Peter says, “...Christ also suffered for you, *leaving an example for you to follow in His steps*” (1 Peter 2:21).

We think of Jesus as our Creator, Savior, and King. And so He is! But He is also our *example* and *teacher*. He is the “Author and Perfecter of faith” as Hebrews says (see 12:2) and so He can teach us how to live *a Faith-Full life* that is pleasing to our Father. We will say more about this as we move through this final unit.

Now, read and reflect on these passages:

**1.3.1 Jesus Was Conceived Through The Power Of The Holy Spirit**

**Matthew 1:18** Now the birth of Jesus Christ happened this way. While his mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.

**Luke 1:35** The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called the Son of God.

### 1.3.2 **We Are Re-Born Through The Work Of The Holy Spirit**

**Titus 3:5** ... (God) saved us not by works of righteousness that we have done but on the basis of his mercy, through the washing of the new birth and the renewing of the Holy Spirit...

### 1.3.3 **Jesus Was Baptized By The Holy Spirit**

**Luke 3:21-22** ... Jesus also was baptized. And while He was praying, the heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, *“You are my one dear Son; in you I take great delight.”*

### 1.3.4 **We Are Baptized With The Holy Spirit**

**1 Corinthians 12:13** For in/by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. Whether Jews or Greeks or slaves or free, we were all made to drink of the one Spirit.

### 1.3.5 **Jesus Was Filled With The Holy Spirit**

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

### 1.3.6 **We Are Indwelt By The Holy Spirit**

**1 Corinthians 3:16** Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?

### 1.3.7 **Jesus Was Led By The Holy Spirit**

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

### 1.3.8 **We Are Led By The Holy Spirit**

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

### 1.3.9 **Jesus Was Empowered For His Work By The Holy Spirit**

**Luke 4:14** Then Jesus, in the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and news about him spread throughout the surrounding countryside.

**1.3.10 We Are Empowered By The Holy Spirit**

**Ephesians 3:16-17** I pray that according to the wealth of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner person, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...

**1.3.11 Jesus Was Anointed By The Holy Spirit**

**Acts 10:38** ... with respect to Jesus from Nazareth, God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with him.

**1.3.12 We Are All Anointed By The Holy Spirit**

**2 Corinthians 1:21-22** But it is God who establishes us together with you in Christ and who *anointed* us, 22 who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a down payment.

**1.3.13 Jesus Was Appointed Son-Of-God-In-Power According To The Spirit**

**Romans 1:4** .... [Jesus Christ] was appointed the Son-of-God-in-power according to the Holy Spirit by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**1.3.14 We Are Appointed Sons Of God Through The Holy Spirit**

**Romans 8:16-17** The Spirit himself bears witness to our spirit that we are God's children. 17 And if children, then heirs (namely, heirs of God and also fellow heirs with Christ) - if indeed we suffer with him so we may also be glorified with him.

**Galatians 4:6** And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, who calls "Abba! Father!"



Can you see in these passages how the work of the Holy Spirit shaped the life of the Lord Jesus and also our lives? What stuck out to you reading through these passages this time?

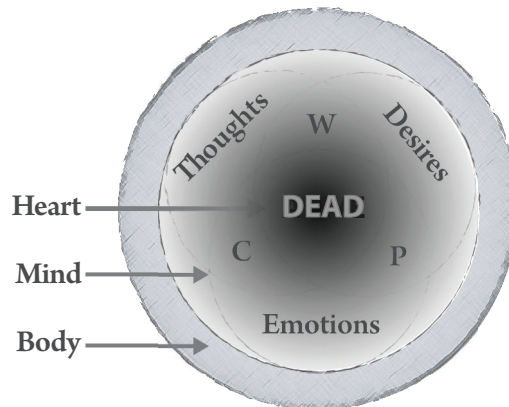
## WORDwork | Day 4

### 1.4 **How Do We Visualize The Holy Spirit In Us?**

Today, we are going to do a little review and think back to some issues that we covered in Phase 1. It is often helpful to be able to visualize the truths we are discussing because we are talking about things that are actually taking place in us.

#### 1.4.1 **We Were Born Physically Alive, but Spiritually Dead.**

**Ephesians 2:1–3** And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. (ESV)

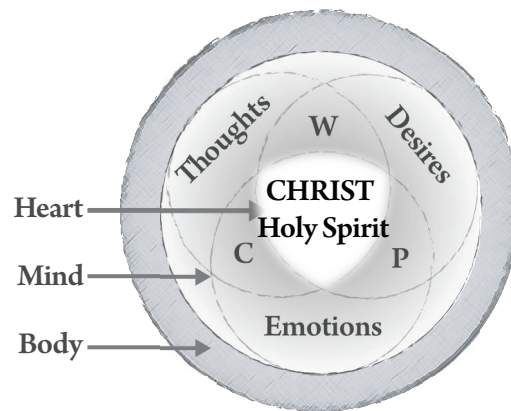


This passage should be familiar to you by now; we have discussed parts of it a couple of times now. In one of the most succinct presentations in the New Testament, Paul lays out the predicament of our “natural” nature before Father God intervened. We were all 1) dead in our sins, 2) living on the World’s present path (which leads to destruction), 3) captivated by Satanic, demonic disobedience, 4) motivated by our own “fleshly desires,” and so 5) by nature, “children of wrath.”

If Paul stopped there, we would be in a whole heap of trouble. BUT, that is not the end of the story...

**1.4.2 We Were Reborn By The Work of the Holy Spirit Through Faith.**

**Ephesians 2:4–10** But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (ESV)



Paul does not mention the indwelling of the Holy Spirit or Christ in this passage. He focuses on the truth of us being “raised up” with Christ to the Heavenly realm, above the corruptions and destructive realities of the World. We were enslaved “DOWN” in the World; We are saved and raised “UP” with Christ.

Paul does talk about the indwelling of Christ and the Holy Spirit a little later in Ephesians:

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



This prayer of Paul's is one of my favorites in the New Testament. He packs some weighty truths into those few statements. If I could summarize this prayer in a simplistic way, I would say that Paul is trying to help us all *realize*—*make it real in our experience*—the amazing and powerful reality that defines who we are In Christ. In other words, he wants us all to live according to the power and presence of the Holy Spirit and Christ—*who both live within us*—so that we all experience the love of Christ and become filled with *all the fullness* of the Lord God's goodness.

That last statement is almost impossible to comprehend. Father God does not want to just give us a “part” of Himself; He wants us to be filled with ALL that He is. Now, it is impossible that we finite creatures could contain ALL that the Lord God is. Paul's point is that Father God is serious about filling us with all His goodness and transforming us to be like Christ, “to maturity, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

And note: Christ dwells in our hearts *through* faith. When we trust Jesus, He and His Spirit come to live with us—that is truth; that is *reality*. I think what Paul is praying here is that we would let our faith and trust in Christ grow so that He and the Spirit shape—dwell in, make a home in—our hearts, the very *core* of our beings. We trusted Christ to save us and we continue trusting Him to transform us. He and the Spirit will do this work *from the inside out*.

Paul concludes this prayer with praise—giving glory to Father God—for His power that is at work within us:

**Ephesians 3:20–21** Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, **according to the power at work within us**, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (ESV)

Take note of what Paul says there: *Father God is able to do far more than what we ask of Him or think He can do!!!* Realizing that Christ lives with us and *within us* and that His Holy Spirit also lives *in us* and *with us* is a life defining truth. Once we realize this and begin to live in light of this truth, our whole outlook is transformed and so are we.



Think about what we have discussed today. How does the reality that Christ and the Holy Spirit live within you through faith affect the way you see yourself and the way you live? What difference should it make?

# Session 2

## How Do We Live by The Holy Spirit?

- Core Truth:** The Holy Spirit has been given to us to enable us to do what no “external law” or commandment could never do: empower us to *live out* the life of Jesus, shaped by the goodness of His character.
- To Remember:** “For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity to indulge your flesh, but through love serve one another.” (Galatians 5:13)
- Objective:** It is important to understand the type of life Father God has called us to and also how He has provided for us to live that life. The Holy Spirit is more powerful than any law or commandment or anything that we could do *in* and *of* ourselves. As we submit to His leading, His fruit will become evident in our lives: *love* and all that accompanies it.
- Prayer:** *Father God, thank You for truly setting me free in Christ. Help me to understand what this means and how I can live out my freedom in love and grace. Amen.*

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## WORDwork | Day 1

### 2.1 **How Have We Been Set Free in Christ Through The Spirit?**

**Galatians 5:1–6** For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not be subject again to the yoke of slavery.

5:2 Listen! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you at all! 5:3 And I testify again to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. 5:4 You who are trying to be declared righteous by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace!

5:5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait expectantly for the hope of righteousness. 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision carries any weight—the only thing that matters is faith working through love.

? 06 For what purpose has Christ set us free?

? 07 What should we stand firm against?

? 08 According 5:4, what has happened to those who are seeking to be declared righteous by the Law?

? 09 What are we waiting for through the Spirit, by faith?

? 10 What is the only thing that matters?

*Galatians is Paul's first letter.* It was written when some key issues of Truth and practical theology were being worked out in the early Church. This passage from Galatians is one of the more significant ones in Paul's writings which deals with the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives—both as individuals and as members of the Body of Christ.

First of all, Paul emphasizes that Christ has set us free *for freedom*. That sounds like an obvious statement, but in the context it highlights an important point for Paul. In this letter, Paul is addressing a form of false teaching that entered this group of churches. The situation was very serious and Paul even called this teaching a “different Gospel”:

**Galatians 1:6–7** I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are following **a different gospel**— 1:7 not that there really is another gospel, but there are some who are disturbing you and wanting **to distort the gospel of Christ**.

In the early Church, the people of God were dealing with *the reality that Jesus changed everything!* The new work that Father God was doing in the Church was to unite Jew (the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and Gentile (everyone else) together as one group, the Body of Christ (see Ephesians 2:11-22). Some from the Jewish tradition had a difficult time understanding and realizing that now, In Christ, the Law—the Mosaic Law—had been superseded by the power of God's grace available in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

This became a major issue when Paul and Barnabas were chosen by the Holy Spirit in the church at Antioch to be sent out to take the Gospel to the nations. Soon, some men appeared *adding to* The Gospel:

**Acts 15:1, 5** Now some men came down from Judea and began to teach the brothers, “**Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.**”...  
15:5 ... some from the religious party of the Pharisees who had believed stood up and said, “**It is necessary to circumcise the Gentiles and to order them to observe the law of Moses.**”

If you think back to our Phase 1 studies, we made a big point that the True Gospel is the Good News of Christ + *Nothing!* These false teachers were saying that it is Christ + Circumcision + Observing the Mosaic Law. As Paul says in Galatians 5:4, those who are teaching such things are alienated from Christ, they have *fallen from grace*. In other words, in not teaching the True Gospel, they were

denying the reality of Christ's work and God's grace. This was a big controversy for the early Church. In fact, the first major Church Council recorded in Acts 15 deals with this issue. Over the years, this form of false teaching has been generally labeled *legalism* and we will discuss it further a little later.

The Elders and the Apostles came together in Jerusalem to decide what to do. After there had been much debate, Peter (who was the first to take the Gospel to the Gentiles) stands up makes the key point:

**Acts 15:7–11** “Brothers, you know that some time ago God chose me to preach to the Gentiles so they would hear the message of the gospel and believe. 15:8 And God, who knows the heart, has testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, 15:9 and he made no distinction between them and us, **cleansing their hearts by faith.** 15:10 So now why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? 15:11 **On the contrary, we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus,** in the same way as they are.”

After Paul and Barnabas shared all the wonderful and even miraculous things that the Lord had done to confirm the Gospel spreading among the Gentiles, **The Jerusalem Council** decided that circumcision and observance of the Mosaic Law was not essential to salvation. They sent a letter to all the new churches explaining their decision (See Acts 15:22-29).

The main thread of Paul's thought in Galatians could be summed up as: *Father God has set His people free in Christ from the powerless requirements of the Mosaic Law and has given them the Holy Spirit to do what no law could ever do.*

Paul says, “For **through** the Spirit, **by** faith, we wait expectantly for the hope of righteousness.” Because we have already been *declared righteous* by grace, through/by faith in Christ, we have the *assured hope* that when we finally stand in the Lord's presence we will be welcomed by Him. We will be accepted not because of what we have done, but because of what *He has done* for us!

Then in summary, Paul says, “*the only thing that matters is faith working through love.*” That is the practical outworking of the power of the Holy Spirit. We will spend these final sessions talking about that key Truth.



Christ has set us free indeed (see John 8:36)! We are both **free from** the powerless requirements of the Law and **free to** follow Christ in the power of the Spirit. We will be exploring this core truth from here on.

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**WORDwork | Day 2**

**Galatians 5:13–26** For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity to indulge your flesh, but through love serve one another. 5:14 For the whole law can be summed up in a single commandment, namely, “You must love your neighbor as yourself.”

5:15 However, if you continually bite and devour one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another. 5:16 But I say, live by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.

- ? 11 What have we been called to?
- ? 12 What should we use our freedom for?
- ? 13 How can the whole Law be summed up?
- ? 14 What will happen if we “live by the Spirit”?

In Galatians 5:1, Paul told us that Christ set us free “for freedoms sake.” Now, he reminds us that we are *called* to this freedom. Our freedom is both a “free *from*” and a “free *for*” or “free *to*.” We could summarize this important truth that appears throughout the New Testament as:

1. We have been set **free from** the enslaving, powerless Law, so that
2. We can be **free to** pursue goodness and righteousness in the new life of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, etc.

Paul develops this key concept most clearly in Romans 6-7. There he makes the case that since we have died *with* Christ—remember, we have been united to Christ *through* faith—our “body of sin” has been destroyed so that we no longer have to be enslaved to the power of sin (see Romans 6:1-7). We have also been

united with Christ in the power of His resurrection (see Romans 6:8-11) and just as Christ has been raised to a new way of life, so also have we:

**Romans 6:11** So you too consider yourselves dead to sin,  
but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Paul makes one more point in Romans 7 that helps us understand his view of our freedom and our relationship to the Law:

**Romans 7:5-6** For when we were in the flesh, the sinful desires, aroused by the law, were active in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. 7:6 **But now we have been released from the law**, because we have died to what controlled us, **so that we may serve in the new life of the Spirit** and not under the old written code.

If you think back to our last workbook, *Rooted and Growing in Christ*, we discussed these key truths in some detail there. Now we can dig a little deeper and talk more about the practical effects of these truths.

Back to the Galatians passages, Paul emphasizes that we have *truly* been set free, but we should use that freedom for **serving one another in love**. Yesterday, we heard, “*the only thing that matters is faith working through love*” (Galatians 5:6). Remember: the whole Law can be summed up, fulfilled in ONE command: “*You must love your neighbor as yourself*.” Love is the fulfillment of the Law (Romans 13:8, 10).

Love is the highest and greatest Christlike virtue. It is the one reality that reveals the deepest facet of the Lord God’s character because, “God is love” (1 John 4:16). The Law can never empower us to love. But now, through the *presence* and *empowerment* of God’s own Spirit, we are free *from* the Law so that we are free *to* love.

Finally, Paul tells us, “live by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.” We will go into more detail on this tomorrow. For now, simply realize that In Christ, you have been given the Holy Spirit and His presence and power enables you to live a type of life that is beyond your “natural” ability. You have been set *free from* the powerless Law to be *free to* live in the new life of the Spirit!



We have skimmed the surface of some important but deep truths today. You might want to review the Session, “Putting on the New Person” in our last workbook, *Rooted and Growing in Christ*.

**WORDwork | Day 3**2.2 **How Are We Led By The Holy Spirit?**

**Galatians 5:17** For the flesh has desires that are opposed to the Spirit, and the Spirit has desires that are opposed to the flesh, for these are in opposition to each other, **so that you cannot do what you want.**

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

**5:19** Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, depravity, **5:20** idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish rivalries, dissensions, factions, **5:21** envying, murder, drunkenness, carousing, and similar things. I am warning you, as I had warned you before: Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God!

? 15 What does the flesh have that is opposed to the Spirit?

? 16 What is the result of being led by the Spirit?

? 17 What will be the outcome for those who practice “the works of the flesh”?

Yesterday, we heard that if you “*live by the Spirit you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.*” In the passage above, we push a little deeper into the significance of that truth. The Spirit has *desires* that are opposed to the Flesh and Flesh has *desires* that are opposed to the Spirit. We have touched on *desires* several times in this study. If you look back our circles on pages 22-23, you know that Desires are a key part of our internal, spiritual framework. A couple of times, we said that we are 1) **Guided** by our Thoughts, 2) **Moved** by our Emotions, and 3) **Driven** by our Desires.

The day after Jesus is baptized by John, he tells two of His disciples that Jesus is “the Lamb of God” (John 1:36). These two disciples then go to follow Jesus. When Jesus realizes they are following Him, He asks them a critical ques-



tion, “*What do you want?*” (John 1:38). As you get to know Jesus, you realize His questions are not haphazard or flippant. In fact, this question—*What do you want?*—is one that Jesus poses to all those who would follow Him.

What we come to realize is that if we are going to follow Jesus, He will transform our “wants”—our *desires*. The spiritual transformation that is taking place *in* and *to* everyone who is In Christ touches every part of us: our thoughts, our emotions, our desires, and one day, at the resurrection, even our physical bodies. Now, in the present, the formation of our *desires* is central to all that Christ is doing to us and in us.

What Paul tells us is that The Spirit is opposed to the Flesh in the “battle” for our desires. As Paul says: “these two are in opposition to each other, ***so that you cannot do what you want.***” This is a foundational, but unpopular truth: *we are not free in and of ourselves; we all must serve someone or something.*

The choices that are before us are simple:

1. Submit, allow yourself to be **led by the Holy Spirit**, or
2. Submit, allow yourself to be **dominated by the Flesh**.

The Flesh is constantly calling us to “do it on own,” to make ourselves the center of everything. The result is the **works** of the Flesh that Paul summarizes above. Take a look at that list carefully; it is not pretty. These are all things that result when “I don’t get MY way!” They are the result when self-serving, self-focused individuals try to live together, each demanding their own “rights.”

**And take note:** *those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom!* This is a strong warning. *We all will fail and falter in our walk with Christ.* But our lives should not be *continually characterized* by things like the “works” of the Flesh. If we truly belong to Christ and His Spirit is *with* us and *in* us, He will not allow us to continue in these ways which are opposed to the goodness of His Kingdom.

The Holy Spirit is leading us in a different direction. If we follow Him, He will produce His “fruit” in and through us. The work that Father God is doing in us through His spirit, is something that cannot be accomplished through external compulsion. *Love can only be formed within, it can be forced from the outside.*

Also, notice once more that Paul says, “If we are led by the Spirit, we are not under the Law.” The power of the Spirit *within* us is greater than the weakness of the Law *outside* us. Tomorrow, we will take a look at the “Fruit of the Spirit” to get a clear picture of where He is leading us.



You probably know the conflict of the Spirit and the Flesh in a very experiential way. Take a minute to think about ways you have experienced this struggle.

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**WORDwork | Day 4****2.3 What Is The Fruit Of The Spirit?**

**5:22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 5:23 gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 5:24 Now those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also behave in accordance with the Spirit. 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, being jealous of one another.

? 18 Why do you think Paul calls these qualities the “Fruit” of the Spirit as opposed to the “Works” of the Flesh?

? 19 Why do you think there is no Law against things like the Fruit of the Spirit?

? 20 What has happened to those who belong to Christ?

? 21 What should we do if we are living by the Spirit?

Yesterday, we discussed the Desires of the Spirit vs. the Desires of the Flesh. In that section, Paul listed some examples of the “works” of the Flesh. Today, we focus on the “Fruit” of the Spirit. It is important that Paul distinguishes “works” from “fruit.” The term “work” leads us to think of doing thing by our own power and effort. The term “fruit” leads us to think of something that is being produced in and through us, not by our effort, but by the power of the Spirit.

If think about a fruit tree, it doesn’t spend its time *working hard* to produce fruit. Instead, when it is given water, nutrients from the soil, and sunlight, the fruit is produced as the natural function of the tree. We were designed to be the image

and likeness of our Creator God, to be “fruitful” in every way, even expressing His goodness and righteousness in all that we are. Sin corrupted that process, but now In Christ, through the Holy Spirit, we can be made “fruitful” again. This is not something we do by our own energy and power, but doing *what we can* to give ourselves over to the Spirit.

Paul lists 9 “fruits” of the Spirit. But take note: Paul uses the singular term “fruit.” This has led some to think that Paul sees only 1 fruit of the Spirit: **Love**. The other 8 would simply be filling out what Love looks like when lived out. It may be that Paul is thinking of all these qualities as a singular “unit” as they are all interconnected and related with Love being the prime virtue that links them all together. He has a similar construction in Colossians:

**Colossians 3:12–14** Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 3:13 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. 3:14 **And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.** (ESV)

The list of the “fruit” here is fairly self explanatory. These are character qualities that characterize Jesus Himself. It is also significant that these qualities are necessary to cultivate fellowship and peace and oneness among Christ’s people. The works of the Flesh promote discord and strife and division.

There is no Law against these types of things—the Fruit of the Spirit because Law is given to *point out* and *condemn* what is untrue, unjust, unwholesome, unlovely. In the reality of Father God’s creation, the qualities like the Fruit of the Spirit define what is eternal, *what is forever valuable*—things that characterize The Kingdom and The King.

Again, Paul emphasizes a key truth: ***In Christ and with Christ our Flesh has been crucified along with its desires and passions.*** In Christ, the “power” our Flesh can have over us has already been broken. We are truly free and we could use that freedom to give ourselves over to the “Fleshly desires.” Sadly, many who claim to follow Christ do that very thing. Paul calls us to something better: *to live by the leading and empowerment of the Spirit.*

If we are truly living by The Spirit, His Fruit will become evident in our behavior. If we are truly living by The Spirit we should also behave in a way that is consistent with the goodness of The Spirit.

As a illustration of all this, Jesus teaches us an important spiritual truth through the example of the “Good Tree vs. Bad Tree”:

**Luke 6:43–45** “For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, 6:44 for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from brambles. 6:45 The good person out of the good treasury of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasury produces evil, for his mouth speaks from what fills his heart.”

In Christ, we are in the process of being transformed into “Good Trees.” We are being transformed into people who are defined by goodness and grace: **love**. This is not something that is directly in our power to do. It is something that is being done to us.

At the end of this passage, Paul uses similar agricultural figures of speech, the imagery of “harvest,” to highlight the results of “sowing” to the Spirit as opposed to the Flesh:

**Galatians 6:7–10** Do not be deceived. God will not be made a fool. For a person will reap what he sows, 6:8 because **the person who sows to his own flesh will reap corruption from the flesh**, but **the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit**.

Father God desires that we “sow to The Spirit” which means doing what we do, living our lives, investing in the things of The Spirit and following Him as He leads us to be like Christ. This is not something we are only doing for ourselves; we are living this “Spirit led Way” to serve others, especially our other brothers and sisters in Christ.

**Galatians 6:9** So we must not grow weary in doing good, for in due time we will reap, if we do not give up. 6:10 So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who belong to the family of faith.

As we move forward we are going to be discussing ways we can *cooperate* with Father God as He works *in* us and *through* us. It is important to remember that this is a *process* and Father God does not expect you to be *perfect* now. It is also important to remember that Father God has saved us **in order to make us like Jesus**. He does not expect us to do this on our own. He has given us His Spirit and the Body of Christ to build us up into a House, a Temple in which He makes His Home in us all.



Think about this whole passage. You may want to read it all again in one sitting: Galatians 5:1-26. Does the Fruit of the Spirit characterize your life? If not, why?



# Session 3

## What Are The Five Growth Ministries Of The Holy Spirit?

- Core Truth:** The Holy Spirit has been given to us to guide us into all truth, which is Jesus our Lord. He leads us, intercedes for us, empowers us and desires to fill us so that we can experience the reality of Jesus' life in the here and now and not just in the hereafter.
- To Remember:** "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom." [ 2 Corinthians 3:17 ]
- Objective:** In this session we want to see clearly how the Holy Spirit works within us to lead us to and glorify Jesus. The Holy Spirit is our great Advocate—our helper, our witness, our guide, our power. As we turn ourselves over to Him, He will fill us with the Life of Christ Himself, full of truth, goodness and glory.
- Prayer:** *Father God, thank You for sending the Holy Spirit to work in me, doing what I could not do for myself. Thank you for calling me up and into your life. Amen.*

## WORDwork | Day 1

### 3.1 **How Does The Holy Spirit Help Us To Grow To Maturity?**

We explored some of the ways that the Holy Spirit worked in both the life of our Lord Jesus and in our lives. These “New Birth” ministries define who we have become, alive *in Christ*. This week we will consider **Five Growth Ministries** of the Holy Spirit.

The Growth ministries are *ongoing* ministries of the Holy Spirit. These ministries are done *to us* and *for us* so that we may grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus. These ministries help us to become the children that Father-God has designed us to be in Christ. These five ministries are those of the Spirit’s 1) Teaching, 2) Illuminating, 3) Leading, assuring, praying, 4) Empowering, and 5) Filling. These ministries of the Holy Spirit enable us to produce His “fruit” that we discussed last week.

John 14-16 is a very important section of Scripture for understanding the work of the Holy Spirit in the current age. Although Jesus is talking specifically to The Apostles and how the Spirit would work in and through them in the days to come, we also see that much of what Jesus says has application to what the Spirit does *in, to, and through* us.

In John 14-16, Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the *Advocate* or *Helper*. The word that is used here is the term *parakletos* and is difficult to translate by one term into English. It is helpful to see how Jesus defines the work of the Spirit when He uses this term. The Spirit as The Advocate will 1) *teach* the Apostles and *cause* them to remember all that Jesus had already taught them (John 14:26), 2) He will *testify* about Jesus—give the final witness to the reality of who Jesus is (John 15:26), and 3) *represent* the very presence of Jesus with His people while He is in Heaven (John 16:7). Based on this foundation, we can take a look at these other specific ministries that come to us by the Spirit.

#### 3.1.1 **The Holy Spirit Guides Us To And Teaches Us The Truth.**

**John 14:24–26** I (Jesus) have spoken these things while staying with you (The Twelve Apostles). 14:26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, *will teach you everything, and will cause you to remember everything I said to you.*

**John 16:13** But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, **He will guide you into all truth.** For he will not speak on his own authority, but will speak whatever He hears, and will tell you what is to come.

When Jesus first spoke the words of John 14, *He was speaking directly to the Apostles*, the men who would give witness to Him in the coming days and even write part of the New Testament. So, in one sense, these verses do not apply *directly* to us in the same way that they applied to these men. However, the Spirit does teach us. The Spirit is present with us to “guide us into all truth.”

Throughout John 14-16, Jesus refers to the Spirit as **the Spirit of Truth** (see John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). The Spirit’s role is to show us Truth and teach us Truth. This *Truth is Jesus*:

**Ephesians 4:20–21** But you did not learn about Christ like this (in impurity and greed), 4:21 if indeed you heard about Him and were taught in Him, just as **the truth is in Jesus**.

**John 14:6** Jesus told him, “I am the way, **the truth**, and the life.  
No one comes to the Father except through Me.

When we read and study the Written Word of God, the Spirit helps us to understand what is revealed there. He does not always reveal things to us as we would like for Him to; instead He opens our minds to understanding at the right time, when we are able to hear and respond.

The Spirit also guides us in hearing the Living Word of God as Jesus Himself guides us in our day to day life. As we read and study God’s Written Word, we need wisdom in knowing how to apply it to daily life. The Spirit guides us in this as well. As we go through the other “growth ministries” of the Spirit we will see how they are all tied together by this “truth ministry” of the Holy Spirit.

### 3.1.2 **The Holy Spirit “Illuminates” Our Hearts And Minds So That We Can Both Understand And Receive God’s Truth.**

**1 Corinthians 2:12** Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, *so that we may know the things that are freely given to us by God.* 13 And we speak about these things, not with words taught us by human wisdom, but with those *taught by the Spirit*, explaining spiritual things to spiritual people.

14 The unbeliever (natural man, “soulish” man) does not **receive** (welcome) the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him. And he cannot **understand** them, because they are spiritually



discerned. 15 *The one who is spiritual* discerns all things, yet he himself is understood by no one. 16 For who has known the mind of the Lord, so as to advise him? **But we have the mind of Christ.**

This ministry is very closely associated with the *teaching* ministry of the Spirit and also His *anointing* ministry. The Spirit is ever present with us to lead us into the Truth that God has revealed to us. Without this ministry, we would never be able to hear and respond to God's truth.

In the 1 Corinthian passage above, Paul's main argument is that only "spiritual people" can *understand* and *receive* (**welcome**) the truth of God into their lives. This is because the truth of God is "spiritual discerned"—His Spirit gives us understanding of what He has communicated. In this passage "spiritual people" are those who have the Spirit of God. Those who do not have the Spirit, those who are still "natural" (or "soulish" - this is the term Paul uses in verse 14 - "*of the soul*") cannot receive and understand the things of God because they do not have the Spirit. We, who are "in Christ" can know and understand what God has given us because His Spirit is present with us leading us to understand and welcome His truth.



For the rest of your time today, read John chapters 14—17. This is a powerful section of Scripture that will help you understand the ministry of the Spirit better.

**WORDwork | Day 2****3.1.3 The Holy Spirit Leads, Assures And Intercedes For Us As God's Beloved Children.**

**Romans 8:14-27** For all who are **led by the Spirit of God** are the sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery leading again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 *The Spirit himself bears witness to our spirit that we are God's children.* 17 And if children, then heirs (namely, heirs of God and also fellow heirs with Christ) if indeed we suffer with him so we may also be glorified with him ...

26 ...the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how we should pray, but the *Spirit himself intercedes for us* with inexpressible groanings. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes on behalf of the saints according to God's will.

? 22 How does Paul define the "sons of God" in 8:14? What is the Spirit doing for them?

? 23 What "spirit" is the Holy Spirit contrasted to in 8:15?

? 24 What does the Spirit do for us in 8:16-17?

? 25 What does the Spirit do for us in 8:26?

This passage is one of the most comforting passages in all the New Testament relating to the Holy Spirit. Last week, we looked at 8:1-13, the first part of this passage. As we continue on, we hear that the Spirit of God is *leading* the sons of God. If you look at the context, you will discover that this is taking place whether

you are completely aware of it or not. The Holy Spirit is now leading each of us in Christ in hope, trust, and love—to *follow Jesus by faith*. He is not leading us in fear and slavery but in *freedom and glory* (see the rest of chapter 8 of Romans).

Another ministry of the Holy Spirit that we hear in this verse is that He is *constantly bearing witness to our spirits* that we are in fact Children of God. If you remember, one of the ministries of the Spirit is to bear witness about Jesus. Here, He bears witness *to us*. He is ever speaking to our “depths” reminding us that we are in fact Father-God’s beloved children. He constantly speaks within us, “*You belong to God; You are His child.*” And if we are His children, then we are also heirs with Christ of the Kingdom to come. This ministry of the Spirit should cultivate our hope and joy.

As the Spirit leads us and witnesses to us, He is also interceding for us. He helps us in our weakness. We don’t know how we ought to pray. But the Holy Spirit who has access to the mind of Christ and also knows the desires of the Father is always praying for us, *interceding for us*—asking the exact right thing for us in whatever circumstances we find ourselves. What a great encouragement! The Spirit is always praying for us exactly what we need! Notice these prayers take the form of “inexpressible groanings”—what the Spirit prays cannot be translated into human language because His thoughts are *too deep*. As the Spirit leads us, He is asking for what we need along the way.

### 3.1.4 **The Holy Spirit Empowers Us To Live/Walk As God’s Children.**

**Galatians 5:16-25** But I say, live (literally *walk*) by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.

In our last study, *Walking in the Truth*, we considered how the Spirit is seeking to guide us and empower us to live by trust in Christ. This is opposed to *the Sin that Dwells within us* which seeks to get us to live by our own self will and self-empowerment. As we heard there, the Holy Spirit is the very power that raised Jesus from the Dead. Now, He lives within us empowering us to live a whole new way of life. We see this reflected in other passages in the New Testament:

**Romans 15:13** Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe in him, so that you may abound in hope **by the power of the Holy Spirit**.

In the second half of this workbook, we are going to focus on things we can do to become more *aware* of the Spirit’s work within us and how we can *cooper-*

*ate* with His work. His power is always available to us and there are *exercises* we can do and *habits* we can form to make that power real in our lives.

### 3.1.5 **The Holy Spirit Fills Us As We Submit To His Leading.**

**Ephesians 5:18-21** Now do not get drunk with wine, which leads to corrupt self-indulgence, but allow yourselves to be filled up by/ in the Spirit, 19 (which will overflow) in **speaking** to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, **singing** and making music in your hearts to the Lord, 20 always **giving thanks** to God the Father for each other in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 and **submitting** to one another out of reverence for Christ.  
(*Our Translation*)

The Spirit seeks to fill us with the *joyous* and *loving* reality of His Divine Life - the Life of Father-Son-Spirit. In this passage, Paul is contrasting a life of drunkenness (being filled with *liquid "spirits"!*) with living a life *filled* and *overflowing* with the life of The Spirit of God. When we allow the Spirit to fill us up, our lives will overflow with the types of things Paul mentions in this passage. We will *speak* to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. These were some of the earliest ways that the church encoded and passed on its core teaching, truths about Christ, and values. We will be filled with joy, singing and making music in our hearts to the Lord. We will constantly be *giving thanks* in all circumstances, realizing that Father-God is always at work in Christ on our behalf. Finally will be characterized by our *submission to one another*. The very essence of the Lord God is a "spirit" of *submission* and *service*.

This will be our main thread of thought from here on: *The Spirit has been given to us to lead us and empower us to live in self-sacrificing love because this is who God is and what we have experienced from God Himself*. As we follow the Spirit who is following Christ, we will be characterized by joy, thanksgiving and submissive love for one another and for all.



Think about all you have read for today. How do these truths shape or change the way you think about the Holy Spirit? How might these truths affect the way you live?

## WORDwork | Day 3

### 3.2 What Is The Process Of Spiritual Growth?

Although there is no “formula” for spiritual growth, it does help us to understand the resources and the means that God uses to grow us toward Christlikeness. *Everyone* on Planet Earth is being *spiritually formed*. If you will remember from our earlier studies, we know that we all have human *spirits* and these are being shaped and formed. They are either being formed by the Holy Spirit or by the “spirit of the World.” Since we have been discussing the Holy Spirit’s ministry *to* us and *in* us and *through* us, it is important for us to see how His work fits with other aspects of our lives.

When we talk about spiritual growth and formation, we are talking about the *process in which Father God is shaping us to be like Christ through the work of His Spirit*. It is important for us to see the “process” that God is using to move us toward this goal. Consider the following chart:

Holy Spirit +	Time +	Spiritual Exercises >	Spiritual Growth
Ministries of New Birth and Growth	in Fellowship with other Disciples and in the trials of everyday life	Hearing Praying Serving	Toward Christlikeness

This is not a “formula” for spiritual “success.” *There is no such thing*. This is more of a “recipe.” The process of spiritual growth cannot be reduced to an equation because each student/disciple/apprentice will be different. These three key elements or *ingredients*, however, are the foundational pieces in any plan that seeks to cultivate spiritual growth.

You should read the chart as “The ministries of the Holy Spirit *worked out in* Time *spent in fellowship* with other disciples in the trials of life, *cultivated through* spiritual exercises *produces* spiritual growth.” We are going to spend the rest of this study considering how all of these things work together. Let’s unpack the chart for a few minutes here.

**3.2.1 Ingredient 1: The Holy Spirit**

As you should see by now, the Holy Spirit is the greatest gift that the Lord has given to us to direct, empower and realize our spiritual growth toward Christ-likeness. His ministries *for* us and *in* us accomplish what we cannot do for ourselves. As we learn to hear Him, follow Him, and submit to Him as He leads us into deeper relationship with Christ, we will discover that His work is powerfully effective.

**3.2.2 Ingredient 2: Time**

Everything that lives *takes time* to grow. Spiritual maturity cannot be attained overnight. TIME alone will not help us grow spiritually; *we need a certain kind of time*. In our chart we talk about two kinds of time: 1) time spent in fellowship with other believers and 2) time spent in the “trials of life.” When it comes to spiritual growth, you cannot “go it alone.” You need your other brothers and sisters in Christ. It would be good to study all the “one another” passages in the New Testament to get a good sense of what we are called to do with “one another.” Just as the Father, Son and Spirit are bound together in eternal fellowship, pursuing a common mission, so also we should be bound together, spending time together encouraging one another and “stimulating one another to love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

But there is also another type of time (not nearly as popular) which helps us to grow: *time spent in the trials of life*. These “trials” may be little or they may be large. Whatever the case, they are given to us to shape Christ in us:

**James 1:2–4**      My brothers and sisters, consider it nothing but joy when you fall into all sorts of trials, 1:3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 1:4 And let endurance have its perfect effect, so that you will be perfect and complete, not deficient in anything.

**Romans 5:3–5**      More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 5:4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5:5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (ESV)

### 3.2.3 **Ingredient 3: Spiritual Exercises**

Finally, this whole process is cultivated in the SPIRITUAL EXERCISES. Hearing, Praying, and Serving are key actions that we use to exercise spiritually and cultivate our spiritual growth. We will develop these over the course of this study.

### 3.2.4 **Result: Spiritual Growth and Maturity.**

Ultimately, it is our Heavenly Father who takes the final responsibility in our growth. Remember this:

**1 Thessalonians 5:23–24** Now may the God of peace Himself make you completely holy and may your spirit and soul and body be kept entirely blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 5:24 **He who calls you is trustworthy, and He will in fact do this.**

In all that we are talking about here, all we are doing is *cooperating* in the work that Father God is doing *in Christ through* the Holy Spirit in us. In all of this, we are quieting our souls, listening to Him, trusting Him and allowing Him to fill us with the reality of His glorious life.

This is a good point to lay out the key growth stage that we are exploring in this workbook. As we have moved through this larger study, we have already touched on the concepts of being 1) Aware, 2) Alive, 3) Awake, and 4) Free. As Father God establishes these realities in our hearts and minds, He leads us to be FAITHFUL:

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**Key Growth Stage:** Becoming **FAITHFUL**. As we grow spiritually, we should become more faithful to our deeper commitment to Father God in Christ. Another way to think of this is becoming “Faith-Full” - we want our faith in Christ to fill and shape every aspect of our lives. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4:2 “Now what is sought in stewards is that one be found *faithful*!” A steward is someone who has been entrusted with someone else’s possessions or property. Father God has entrusted us with His grace and power. Now, He desires that we be faith-full to Him in the way we use both.

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As you think about today’s reading, is there anything new to you here? Can you see the simplicity of this growth process? What would you like to know more about?



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**WORDwork | Day 4****3.3 Seeing The Glory Of The Lord Through The Spirit.****2 Corinthians 3:17-18**

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom. 18 And we all, with unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, which is from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

In the Big Picture, the main role of the Holy Spirit is to help us see, understand and receive the Truth about Jesus and the Truth that IS Jesus. Living in this Truth leads to our *freedom*. In John 8:31-32, Jesus said, “If you continue to follow my teaching, you are really my disciples and you will know the truth, and **the truth will set you free.**”

Paul says something very important in the 2 Corinthians passage above: **The Lord (Jesus) IS the Spirit**. Notice he says this twice, in verse 17 and at the end of verse 18. In a real sense, the Holy Spirit IS the Spirit of the Lord Jesus. This touches on that incomprehensible mystery of the Trinity. If you remember, Jesus said several times that He and the Father are One, and “If you have seen me you have seen the Father.” Jesus is the very expression of the Father (see Hebrews 1:3). The Holy Spirit, in a similar manner, is the very expression of the Lord Jesus. Where the Spirit is, the presence of Jesus is also represented. Jesus wanted His disciples to know the truth and to be free; The Holy Spirit leads us to the Truth in Jesus to set us free.

As The Spirit does His work in us—illuminating our hearts and minds to live according to the truth—we are being transformed, step by step, to reflect more of the glory of Christ. *This is the real goal of the growth ministries of the Holy Spirit.*

An important principle that we see in Scripture is that we become like what we worship—focus on, make central, direct our lives toward. In the Hebrew Scriptures, those who worship useless, worthless idols become like them:

**Psalms 115:4–8**

115:4 [The Nations’] idols are made of silver and gold  
— they are man-made.

115:5 They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see,

115:6 ears, but cannot hear, noses, but cannot smell,

115:7 hands, but cannot touch, feet, but cannot walk.



They cannot even clear their throats.

**115:8 Those who make them will end up like them,  
as will everyone who trusts in them.**

As we focus on Christ—worship Him as the One worthy of our time, adoration, and praise—we will become more and more like Him!

As you think about these growth ministries of the Holy Spirit, reflect on the following passages:



**John 15:26-27** When the Advocate comes, whom I will send you from the Father - the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father - **He will testify about me**, 27 and you also will testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.

**John 16:13-14** He (The Holy Spirit) **will glorify me**, because he will receive from me what is mine and will tell it to you. 15 Everything that the Father has is mine; that is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what is mine and will tell it to you.

The main ministry of the Holy Spirit is *to lead people to Christ*, to testify about Him and *glorify* Him, which means to show why Jesus is worthy of praise and adoration. For all of us who are IN Christ, the Holy Spirit enables us to focus on Christ so that we become more and more like Him.

In our times, there are many who glorify the Holy Spirit—they focus on the Holy Spirit. We must be very careful about this. *The Holy Spirit has been given to us to glorify Christ*. He is not here to glorify us or Himself by His work in us. As we follow Him, He will lead us to Christ, to see His glory more clearly.

As you think on these things, consider the following questions:

-  Based on what we have studied in these last couple of lessons, how do you think the Holy Spirit works in your heart and mind as you read the Bible? What is He seeking to do?
-  What is the Holy Spirit seeking to with your 1) thoughts and 2) desires and 3) emotions? How do you think He is seeking to shape you, spiritually speaking?

# Session 4

## What Are Spiritual Exercises?

- Core Truth:** Even though we do not work to earn our salvation or our blessing or our acceptance from God, there are exercises that we can do which lessen the grip the World has on our flesh so that we can be more attentive and responsive to Father-God who is at work in Christ by means of the Spirit.
- To Remember:** “... continue working out your salvation with awe and reverence, for the one empowering in you both the desire and the empowerment—for the sake of his good pleasure—is God. [Philippians 2:12–13\*]
- Objective:** In this session we begin to look at serving the spiritual exercises which help us to “put on Christ,” to “put on the new person” who has been fashioned according the image of the One who created us - our Lord Jesus. These are not things that we do to *obligate* God to bless us. Instead, these are things that we do to lessen our attachment to the things of the world that seek to keep us distracted from Father-God’s work in Christ in us through the Spirit.
- Prayer:** *Father, thank You for all the blessings I have in Christ. Help me to understand the things I can do to make your grace and love more real and powerful in my life. Help me to grow in spiritual maturity in Christ so that I can be a blessing to others. Amen.*

## WORDwork | Day 1

### 4.1 What Habits Did Jesus Practice?

**Isaiah 50:4–7** The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples,  
That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word.

He awakens Me morning by morning,  
He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.

50:5 The Lord GOD has opened My ear;  
And I was not disobedient,  
Nor did I turn back.

50:6 I gave My back to those who strike Me,  
And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard;  
I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting.

50:7 For the Lord GOD helps Me,  
Therefore, I am not disgraced;  
Therefore, I have set My face like flint,  
And I know that I shall not be ashamed.

? 26 This passage from Isaiah is one of the Servant Songs that describes the way Jesus Himself lived. Think about Jesus Himself saying these words. According to verse 4 who taught Jesus? How did Jesus generally respond to this teaching in verse 5?

**Mark 1:35–38** Then Jesus got up early in the morning when it was still very dark, departed, and went out to a deserted place, and there he spent time in prayer. 1:36 Simon and his companions searched for him. 1:37 When they found him, they said, “Everyone is looking for you.” 1:38 He replied, “Let us go elsewhere, into the surrounding villages, so that I can preach there too. For that is what I came out here to do.”

? 27 Notice what Jesus is doing. Why do you think he is doing what He is doing?

**Mark 10:42–45** ...Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in high positions use their authority over them. 10:43 But it is not this way among you. Instead whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, 10:44 and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of all. 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

? 28 What is the main teaching that Jesus gives in this passage? How has He modeled what He is teaching His disciples what to do?

As we get more focused on the question, “*How should we live, knowing what we know?*” it is important to understand that Jesus has modeled the life that Father-God desires for us. As we have been saying, it is critically important to understand that Jesus never played the “I am God” card while He was here on Earth. The Father, working through the power of the Spirit did incredible miracles through Jesus, no doubt.

But Jesus also came to leave us an *example, a model* of how we should live our lives in total dependence on Father-God. Consider this:

**1 Peter 2:20–21** ... But if you do good and suffer and so endure, this finds favor with God. 2:21 For to this you were called, since Christ also suffered for you, *leaving an example for you to follow in his steps.*

In this context, Peter is talking about suffering for doing what is good. Jesus experienced this. Jesus suffered *for* us. He did this to save us, for sure, but He also endured His “unjust suffering” in order to give us an example to follow, a model of how to live in this broken world. If we read the Gospels carefully, we should see that Jesus also gives us a model of how to live life in general: obediently, prayerfully, serving all in every opportunity.

#### 4.1.1 **Jesus was taught by Father-God. (Hearing and Seeing)**

In the Isaiah passage above, we hear that Jesus—as the Suffering Servant—was taught by the Lord God, Father God, morning by morning as the Father awakened His ear, enabling Him to hear and respond to what He needed to learn for the day. ***Jesus, the Master Disciple maker, learned first from His Father.*** Because of this, our Lord “set his face like flint,” meaning that He was completely com-

mitted to do what the Father desired for Him, no matter what the cost. Jesus followed the Father and this resulted in insult, humiliation, torment and death. Yet in none of this was the Lord finally *ashamed* or *disgraced*. The Father vindicated Him in the end.

#### 4.1.2 **Jesus Prayed (a lot!).**

We also see Jesus taking time to pray—early in the morning, late at night, throughout the day. On the night before He chose the 12 Apostles, Jesus spent all night in prayer! (see Luke 6:12). Think about that for a minute: *Jesus spent all night in prayer!* This gives us great insight into how important Jesus considered prayer. Prayer was maybe the most important part of Jesus' daily life. He taught His disciples how to pray and we even have several of Jesus' own prayers recorded for us in the Gospels.

#### 4.1.3 **Jesus Served.**

If we look at the whole of Jesus' life, it will not surprise us to see that it is characterized by *self-less service*. He taught on this very pointedly toward the end of His ministry. In Jesus' Kingdom the Greatest are measured by their service to all. Two great images present this to us: 1) Jesus washing His disciples' feet on the night before His crucifixion and 2) Jesus on the Cross.

These three activities, which were habits in Jesus' life—Hearing from the Father, Prayer, and Service—form the core activities that we cultivate in our own lives to follow in the Way of Jesus.



**Directed Reading.** At some point, you might read through the Gospels asking the question, “How did Jesus live life day to day?” or “What were the habits that Jesus formed in His life?” This is what I call directed reading: reading through a book of the Bible (or several books) thinking about only one specific question. This will help you see things in a new light.

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**WORDwork | Day 2**

4.2

**What Are Spiritual Exercises And How Do They Work?**

One of the goals that we have for MilktoMeat as a whole is to provide you with both the proper “diet” and “exercise” for spiritual growth. The proper diet for a Christian is the Written and Living Word of God. As Jesus told the Tempter, “A person does not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). The Word of God is our spiritual food.

We also know that proper diet is not enough, *we also need exercise*. This is true both in the physical and spiritual realms. Let’s take a few minutes to think about the nature of spiritual exercise.

Spiritual exercises have been largely neglected in contemporary Christianity. Nevertheless, they are *essential* to growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Some call these exercises “disciplines.” We are going to use the term “exercise” because it describes what we are doing by engaging in these activities: we are exercising “spiritual muscles.”

The more we engage in these exercises, the more we form *habits* that keep us heading in the right direction—focused on Christ, following Him closely. So, generally speaking, what is a spiritual exercise?

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**Key Definition:** A **Spiritual Exercise** is an **activity** that involves **our whole being** (physical and spiritual, body and spirit) that we **intentionally practice** for the purpose of developing **Christlike habits, empowered** and sustained by the **grace** of Father God.

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Notice a couple of things in this definition:

1. **An activity that involves your whole person** | Spiritual exercises involve both our “external/physical” selves and our “internal/spiritual” selves. These are activities that involve our bodies, minds, and hearts
2. **Intentional Practice** | These are activities that we pursue with purpose. We are willfully and intelligently taking on these practices to focus on growing more like Christ.
3. **Christlike Habits** | These are practices that we are “building in” to the flow of our whole life, for the rest of our lives.

4. **Empowered and Sustained by the Grace of Father God** | These are not things that we do on our own; they are completely intertwined with God's grace at work in us. These activities will build up our "spiritual muscle" so to speak. This does not mean that we are becoming strong on our own but learning to rest in Father God's power and strength available to us In Christ.

#### 4.2.1 **What Is The Principle Of Indirect Effort?**

First of all, we remember that our Father is working all things together to make us *like Christ*. We want to *cooperate* with Him in that goal. In our pursuit to be more Christlike, we find that we cannot *will* ourselves to achieve this goal. Many new disciples have been disappointed to discover that you cannot say, "Ok, today I am going to be more like Jesus..." and have everything fall into place. In fact, most of us have discovered that the minute you say something like that, failure and shame are usually quick to follow. Instead of pursuing this goal head on, *we practice the types of things Jesus did and this will create space in our souls for His goodness to fill us*.

To give another example, I cannot love my enemies by simply *willing* this. Instead, there are things that I can do to train my mind and heart and in the process I will be *transformed* into *the type of person* who is able to love my enemies. You cannot change your *thoughts* or *desires* or *emotions* by simply willing it to be so (how great would that be!!!). Instead, you must do other things that will *indirectly cause* this transformation to take place.

The Spiritual Exercises are simply activities that we have the ability to do in order to open ourselves to the power of Father God's grace which works within us. These exercises are built on the pattern of Jesus' own life.

#### 4.2.2 **What Is The Principle Of Grace Empowered Effort?**

As we just said above, Father God's grace is a major component of the exercises. If you remember, we defined His grace as *His favor/blessing given to us In Christ that gives us access to His unlimited power in the Holy Spirit*. All that we do is empowered by Father God's grace. We will have more to say about that tomorrow.

Although we depend on the empowerment of the Lord's grace, this does not mean that we are inactive, or just "coast along." Cooperating with the Lord, acting *in* and *through* His grace, can mean work, effort for us. Take a look at the following passages:

**1 Corinthians 15:10** [Paul speaking] But **by the grace of God** I am what I am, and **His grace to me** has not been in vain. In fact, **I worked**



**harder than all of them** [the other Apostles!]—**yet not I, but the grace of God with me.**

**Colossians 1:28–29** 1:28 We proclaim Him [Christ] by instructing and teaching all people with all wisdom so that we may present every person mature in Christ. 1:29 **Toward this goal I also labor, struggling according to His power that powerfully works in me.**

In the 1 Corinthians 15:10, Paul seems to be doing a little boasting! But take note of what he is saying: Paul's hard work was *empowered* by the grace of God within him! In the Colossians 1 passage, Paul says he *labors* and *struggles*—the word he uses there implies “working your fingers to the bone...”—according to the *power* of God at work in him.

There is an important point to be made here: Father God's grace stands opposed to our trying to *earn* His favor. He has blessed us *freely*, out of His own goodness and provision in Jesus Christ (a costly thing for Jesus!). But, His grace does not stand opposed to our effort in cooperating with Him. We call this principle **grace empowered effort** and it is one of the great “secrets” of spiritual growth and formation.

#### 4.3 **Some Practical Advice On The Exercises**

We learn by doing. Cultivating a useful and effective method of exercise that follows this principle of **grace empowered effort** will take two things:

1. **Time** | Spiritual transformation does not happen overnight. Just as there will never be a time in your life when you can give up eating and exercising to maintain your physical body, there will never be a time when you can give up spiritual exercise. These are lifelong pursuits.
2. **Experimentation** | There is no one “blueprint” for every student/disciple/apprentice of Christ. *We are each unique individuals.* As such, what works for me may not work for you. You will want to discover what actually helps you cultivate a deeper communion with Father God by getting insight from others and by patiently figuring out what works best for you.

Thankfully, the Lord's grace and goodness creates space and permission in our growing, deeper relationship with Him to pursue Him in these ways.



We have already covered a lot of ground in this short section today. The truths we have covered here are central to every thing else we will cover. Make sure you have a good understanding of them before moving on.



## WORDwork | Day 3

### 4.4 **How Do We Avoid The Trap Of Legalism?**

**Philippians 2:12–13** So then, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence but even more in my absence, continue working out your salvation with awe and reverence, 2:13 for the one bringing forth in you both the desire and the effort—for the sake of his good pleasure—is God.

? 29 What does Paul tell the Philippians to continue “working out”?

? 30 What is God bringing forth in them?

**1 Timothy 4:7-9** Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; 8 for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. 9 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. (ESV)

? 31 What does Paul tell Timothy to train himself for?

? 32 Why is this goal important?

The things that we have been discussing this week are *dangerous ideas*. Many have twisted these thoughts into *legalism*—the way of thinking that says, “*If I do this, then God must do this ...*” Father-God will not be manipulated this way and He desires a better way for us.

Paul tells the Philippians to “continue working out” their salvation. Now notice, Paul does not say, “working *for*” their salvation. Salvation is something

they already “have” and it needs to be *worked out*—*cultivated into every aspect and facet of their lives*.

Paul then tells them that it is Father God working in them to produce both their *desire* and their *effort*. 2:13 literally says, “*the one empowering in you both the desire and the empowerment...*” is Father God. Father God is at work in us, empowering us to do what is pleasing to Him! We will return to that awesome idea a little later.

In the Timothy passage, Paul tells Timothy to “train himself” and notice the goal of the training: *Godliness*. We are going to see that word again. It means exactly what it sounds like: *to be like God*. It means to be like God in the sense of taking on His virtues, His character qualities. Take note: *Godliness is something that has value in both this life and the one to come!*

Paul also warns Timothy not to get hung up in “irreverent, silly myths.” These “myths” are always traditions that are not in line with the Truth in Christ. One form of these types of myths is *legalism*.

The minute spiritual exercises are turned into an external “law” that *must be done in a certain way*, they are given soul-killing power. *The disciplined life is not a pattern of life that seeks to make deals with Father God*. We do not impose the exercises on ourselves or anyone else with the expectation that merely doing them *obligates* God to work. This is akin to the sympathetic magic that the pagans practice to try to win the favor of their “gods.”

Spiritual exercises are entered into faithfully, hopefully, joyously, and lovingly. We are not seeking to obligate God to bless us. Our goal is to cultivate and put into practice *the grace already given and available to us in Christ* in a Way of life that focuses on Him as our treasure, prize and goal. This helps us avoid the trap of legalism and externalism. ***Father God is working in Christ through the Holy Spirit in us from the inside out, not the outside in.*** Think about that statement and understand its significance. It is one of the most important truths related to our transformation in Christ.

Some false teachers have turned the exercises into “laws,” which are then used to manipulate others (and themselves) through *fear, guilt, and shame*. We call this *legalism*:

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**Key Definition:** **Legalism** is the deceptive teaching that Father God saves us and blesses us ***because*** of what we do. It is a false “gospel” of Christ + Something.

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Legalism has led many to despair. Without the proper attitudes, without the proper mind-set, without the proper focus of heart, the exercises will have little effect on life. In fact, they may even have a disastrous effect on life. The way in which we perceive the use of the exercises is just as important, if not more important, as the practice of the exercises themselves.

We also want to avoid the trap of thinking that this is just about “behavior modification.” This is to say that if I am doing things that are good, then I must be good. Just because we know how to do something does not mean we are automatically producing the desired result. This is true in the spiritual life as well. We can be “nice” to others while hating them in our hearts. Father God desires better for us.

*What we do is important.* But Father-God is also concerned with transforming our thoughts, desires and emotions—parts of us that we can’t change on our own. The reality of Christ living in the “inner person” transforming the attitudes and values of the Heart and Mind is the ultimate goal. Exercises only aid and assist in this task. They may even serve as catalysts and motivators. Yet the proper external behavior is no guarantee that the inner reality is being affected.

Paul began his letter to Timothy by reminding him of the main goal of all that we do:

**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.

If you remember, the greatest commandment is to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30). The point is that we pursue the things that we pursue for the sake of learning to love God more fully and completely in all that we do. We are seeking to cultivate that true, Genuine Love that Jesus Himself has displayed for us.

Next week, as we begin to dig into our three foundational exercises of 1) hearing the Word of God and Seeing His Glory, 2) Praying and 3) Serving, we must understand that these are ways to involve ourselves in the work that Father-God is *already doing within us* and in our other brothers and sisters in Christ. This requires our bodies and our hearts and minds. It requires all that we are. This is a process of growing in that “deep and rich personal knowledge of God” (2 Peter 1:3, 8). Just remember: *We are not working FOR our salvation, we are working OUT the salvation and acceptance and love that we already have in Christ.*



What did you hear today that was new for you? Do you understand what Legalism is?

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**WORDwork | Day 4****4.5 How Do We Implement All Of This?**

**Romans 12:1-2\*** Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice—living, holy, and pleasing to God—which is your genuine worshipping service. 2 And do not allow yourselves to be conformed to this present world; instead, allow yourselves to be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may test and approve what is the will of God - what is good and well-pleasing and perfect.

In this passage from Romans, Paul introduces two “big picture” ideas: 1) *presenting* our bodies as sacrifices, and 2) *allowing* ourselves to be transformed by the renewing of the mind.

First of all, notice that Paul bases these exhortations on a response to the “mercies of God.” I believe this is a way of summarizing all that Paul discussed in the first 11 chapters of this awesome letter to the Romans. *We do what we do as a response to the ways that Father God has mercifully blessed us by His grace In Christ!* Again, we see that our acting is a *response* to Father God’s initiation.

**4.5.1 How do I Present my Body?**

Everything we are and do involves our bodies. In many contemporary discussions on spiritual growth, our bodies are a neglected issue. However, all of life is *experienced* and *expressed* through our bodies. If you think back, we have said that your body is the “vehicle” that is used by your spiritual self to express your identity. Consider what Paul says about this.

**Romans 6:11-14\*** ... So you too consider yourselves *dead to sin, but alive to God* in Christ Jesus.

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its desires, 13 and do not present your members to sin as weapons to be used for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead and your members to God as weapons to be used for righteousness. 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, because you are not under law but under grace.

We have only two choices: 1) present our bodies to God for His service, or 2) present our bodies to the power of sin for unrighteousness. *It really is just that*

*simple*. Each day in the multitude of choices that come before us, these are the two options that stand at the root of every decision.

In Romans 12, Paul exhorts us to give our bodies to God as sacrifices. He then qualifies and describes this sacrifice in three ways:

1. **Alive** | This bodily sacrifice that we are making to God is not a “killing” of ourselves; this is a sacrifice that is ongoing—*alive*. To be clear, as we give ourselves over to God, we do “kill” our fleshly, sin corrupted “old selves.” This sacrifice is a life-long giving of ourselves in service to Father God.
2. **Holy** | This sacrifice of our bodies is one that is *set apart*—the basic meaning of *holy*—to God’s service. *We do things for His sake*. We focus on serving Him for His glory. Since we become like what we worship (see Psalm 115:4–8; 135:15–18), we set ourselves apart to Father God by centering Christ in our lives. In this act, we are submitting ourselves to Him so that we can share in His character. He desires for us to be like Him. As we set our attention on Him, by His grace He will transform us into His likeness.
3. **Pleasing** | This sacrifice that we make with our bodies is one that is based in God’s grace. It is well pleasing to God in that we are offering ourselves to Him, to His power, *so that He might work in us what we could not do ourselves*. It is well pleasing as we become people who are characterized by all that is good and praise-worthy.

Now notice one last thing about all of this: *this is our genuine, real, true worshiping service*. The word that Paul uses here can be translated both as “service” and “worship.” We have combined the ideas because they are closely related in the Bible. In this passage, Paul is drawing on Priest-Sacrifice language out of the Old Testament. In that context, serving God is the basis of true worship. Now, in Christ, *you and I are both priests serving God AND we are also the sacrifice*. We give all of ourselves to Him in service—this is the very essence of true worship.

#### 4.5.2 **How Do We Allow Ourselves to Be Transformed?**

Finally, notice in verse 2 that we are not to *allow* ourselves to be conformed to the World, but instead, we are to *allow* ourselves to be transformed by the renewing of our Minds. If you remember, there are two powers seeking to captivate us: 1) The Devil who is at work in the World through the Sin that dwells in our Flesh and 2) The Father who is at work in Christ through the Spirit who dwells in our

Hearts. The Devil seeks to *press* and *crush* us into his mold—he only wants to *conform* us. Conforming something means to make an external change without affecting its nature or essence. The Devil is happy if you look good on the outside (good behavior) so long as you remain rotten on the inside (thoughts desires, emotions).

Father God, however, seeks to *transform us from the inside out*. He is seeking to *change the core of who we are*. He is transforming, reforming, remaking our thoughts, desires, and emotions so that they are like Christ's.

We have a choice as to who we will *allow* to shape us.

Father-God desires that we follow Him in Christ. He desires that we allow Him to transform us as we cooperate in the *renewing* of our minds. Our Minds *guard* and *process* all our thoughts, desires and emotions. Father God desires that we learn how to lessen the distraction and static that comes to us from the World and our Flesh so that we can focus on His goodness and grace and beauty. Consider this:

**Philippians 4:8-9** Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is worthy of respect, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if something is excellent or praiseworthy, **think about these things**. 9 And what you learned and received and heard and saw in me, do these things. And the God of peace will be with you.

That mindset is at the heart of all we do and especially as we think about our spiritual exercises.



Think about all that you have heard this week. Who are you giving yourself over to on a daily basis? Who are you allowing to shape your life?



# Session 5

## What Are The Three Foundational Exercises?

- Core Truth:** Learning to Hear and See the Father working in Christ through the Spirit and responding in Prayer and self-sacrificial Service are three foundational exercises that enable us to resist being conformed to the World and transformed by the renewing of our minds.
- To Remember:** “...train yourself for godliness. For ‘physical exercise has some value, but godliness is valuable in every way. It holds promise for the present life and for the life to come.’” [1 Timothy 4:7-8]
- Objective:** We want to understand the our three foundational exercises are simple ways to get “unshackled” from the World in order to focus on the beauty of the One True God so that we are equipped to work in the World as “salt” and “light.” These exercises also enable us to loosen the grip our Flesh has on us so that we can be “overflowing” with the Holy Spirit.
- Prayer:** *Father God, thank You for you love and grace. Thank you for the relationship I have with You in Christ. Help me to Hear you and See your glory. Help me to connect with You in my prayers. Help me to see all the opportunities you give me to serve others as I follow the example of Christ. Amen.*



## WORDwork | Day 1

### 5.1 **Spiritual Exercise 1: Hearing And Seeing (Receiving)**

If you have been working through MilktoMeat, many of the ideas we are talking about are not new to you. In fact, we have built aspects of the exercises into everything you have been doing up to this point. Phase 1 introduced these ideas. You may remember us introducing the Spiritual Exercises in Session 5 of *Discovering The Way: Recovering the Master Story*. Take a look at that section again for a little refresher. Now that you have already been doing some of these things, we can focus on the “why” for bit.

The first of the exercises that we use to develop our ability to simply *receive* from the Lord is learning to *hear* from the Lord and *see* His glory. Father God is always the *initiator*—His work and action always comes first. We simply respond to His work that began all things, sustains all things and moves all things toward their conclusions. Hearing goes together with seeing. These are the two primary ways that the Lord’s instruction and guidance get *into* us.

#### 5.1.1 **How Do We Hear The Lord?**

Jesus is the *Living Word* of God. The Bible is the *Written Word*. Our first exercise is concerned with learning to hear from the Lord *in* and *through* His Word. Some people call this study. Studying the Bible is important, but we don’t want only to know the *Written Word* “intellectually” or “academically.” We want to hear the Scriptures in such a way that the *Living Word*—The Lord Jesus—becomes alive, present in all our inner workings: our thoughts, our desires, our emotions.

Jesus warned the Pharisees that they could not “hear” Him because they had not heard the Scriptures properly:

**John 5:39**      You study the Scriptures thoroughly because you think in them you possess eternal life, and it is these same Scriptures that testify about me, ...

As we already know, the Spirit of God is working within us so that we can understand what He has given to us. The Spirit is also leading us to live in a way that is worthy of our calling as Beloved Children of God. As we go to the Scriptures we read, read, read. We read, not just to get new information, but to be transformed by hearing the Lord speaking to us there. As we learn to hear from Him in His



will be capable and equipped for all the good works and actions and activities that He leads us into.

### 5.1.2 How Do We See The Lord?

#### 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And we all, with unveiled face, **beholding the glory of the Lord**, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (ESV)

When we hear (generally speaking), images are formed in our “minds-eye.” This is called our *imagination*. Imagination is not just making up stuff that is untrue or unreal; *Imagination is the ability to form inward images that give shape to our thoughts*. The imagination is the most powerful “mental muscle” that the Lord has given us.

As we read the Word and Hear the Lord, our imaginations should be taking the words and *realizing* them through our imaginations. Pay close attention to what Paul says in the passage above: our transformation takes place as we behold, see, gaze upon the glory (*incomprehensibly radiant beauty*) of the Lord Jesus. We cannot now *see* Jesus face to face. We are called however to think about, imagine His glory.

We can think of other passages that call for us to think about and “look” upon the Lord: “Keep thinking about things above, not things on the earth...” (Colossians 3:2), “[Let us] run with endurance the race set out for us, *keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus*, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:1–2).

So how do we do this, hear in order to see the Lord? We can begin by getting to know Jesus from the Gospels. These books have been given to us so that we can *see* His glory. We read them imaginatively. We put ourselves in the stories. We hear Him talk and teach. We see Him heal the sick. We see Him act graciously toward sinners and shrewdly toward the self-righteous. We take up those God-Breathed Jesus Stories and make them our own. As we do so, we become more aware of the Lord’s presence with us.



There are two key principles we can suggest about this exercise of Hearing and Seeing:

- 1) Develop a daily reading plan that will take you through the whole Bible that moves at a pace that is right for you.
- 2) As you read, Pray, asking, “Father, what do you want me to hear? Father, what do you want me to see?”

**WORDwork | Day 2**5.2 **Spiritual Exercise 2: Praying (Responding)**

**Luke 6:12** Now it was during this time that Jesus went out to the mountain to pray, and He spent all night in prayer to God.

*I believe that prayer is the most important activity that we engage in as followers of Christ. It is easy to say I believe it; it is harder to practice it! The New Testament (and the Old) is filled with either direct or indirect admonitions to pray. The Gospels make it clear that our Lord Jesus was a man of prayer. Take a close look at Luke 6:12 above. This verse is set in the context of Jesus choosing the 12 men who would be His key disciples or *Apostles*. These men would carry Jesus' mission forward after He had returned to Heaven. The night before He chose the 12, Jesus spent all night in prayer! Now think about this: *if the Lord thought it was necessary to spend hours—all night—in prayer with the Father, how do we rationalize getting away with less!?**

Now that statement is not meant to place guilt or shame on us. But it is a sober realization. Jesus considered prayer vitally important to His life and ministry.

Notice however, that we are not told *what* Jesus was praying about—was He asking the Father which men He should choose? Was he praying for the men He already knew He would choose? We are not told. But we do know this: *He prayed all night long.*

5.2.1 **How Should We Pray?**

At several places in the New Testament we are exhorted to *constant* and *continual* prayer:

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**      “Rejoice always; *pray without ceasing*;  
in everything give thanks;  
for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

**Romans 12:12**      Rejoice in hope, endure in persecution, persist in prayer.

**Colossians 4:2**      Be devoted to prayer,  
keeping alert in it with thanksgiving.

**Ephesians 6:18** With every prayer and petition, *pray at all times in the Spirit*, and to this end be alert, with all perseverance and requests for all the saints.

**1 Peter 4:7 \*** The end of all things is at hand; therefore keep your thoughts straight and be sober-minded *for the sake of your prayers*.

*Think of prayer as simply talking to God.* Think of prayer as responding to The Father based on what you have heard in His Word. *You are not trying to tell Him what to do*; you seeking “to be filled with knowledge of His will...” (Colossians 1:9). Prayer is dialogue. Prayer is thanksgiving. Prayer is intercession. Prayer is crying out. Prayer is response.

Paul tells us in Romans 8 that *we do not know how to pray as we should* but the Holy Spirit within us translates our words and intercedes for us according to God’s will (see Romans 8:26-27 and our earlier discussions about the interceding ministry of the Spirit). This leads me to believe that it is not primarily important *how* we pray, *but that we simply pray*.

In the verses listed above, the focus is placed on praying, entering into dialogue with God. So we pray constantly, at all times, soberly, alertly, realizing that our prayers have great effectiveness:

**James 5:16** So confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed. *The prayer of a righteous person has great effectiveness.*

### 5.2.2 Why Do We Pray?

At this point, some may ask the question, “If God is sovereign and in control of all things and everything is going to turn out the way He wants, then why should we pray?” With all respect, let me simply observe that this type of question is usually asked by people who have never persevered in prayer. Again, we look to the example of our Lord Jesus. He is the one who now holds all things together (Colossians 1:17) and is sustaining, guiding them toward His good and glorious conclusion (Hebrews 1:3). When He was on Earth, leading His disciples, giving them a model of godliness and faithfulness, He prayed—He prayed a lot. *Jesus believed that prayer was essential and necessary and so should we.*

In the James passage above we hear that our prayers, the prayers of the righteous, have great *effectiveness*. In the context, James is talking about healing. Our prayers are effective in the Lord’s work in our world. We don’t have to figure out

how all of this works together—that is the Lord’s business. We simply trust Him when He tells us that our prayers are part of His effective work in our world.

This question assumes that prayer is only about “making requests to get things done.” As we said above, prayer is not “telling God what to do...” We make requests to Him, yes. We may even ask Him things over and over, for years. At its heart, prayer is about developing an ongoing *conversational relationship* with Father God, in Christ, through the Spirit. In the end, we might be surprised to learn that our prayers are part of what Father God factored in to His sovereign and providential plans to accomplish His desires!

### 5.2.3 **How Does Praying Relate To Hearing The Word?**

“He that has prayed well has studied well.” Martin Luther

Prayer is the natural response to our first exercise of hearing the word of God. *Father God initiates towards us in His word, we respond in prayer.* Father speaks, we respond. As we pray, we should not be surprised as Father God reveals His presence to us there as well.

As we pray, we are raising our experience *up* and *into* the presence of our Good and Wise King. We confess to Him that we exist by His will and desire and that we desperately need His grace in order to survive the forces of chaos and despair that surround us. As we pray, we gain an *eternal perspective* as our words are shaped by Father’s words in the outworking of His wise will. Prayer is our means of discussing with the Father what He is doing *in us* and *in our world* through the work of His Spirit within us.

Again, it goes beyond the scope of this introduction to deal with all that needs to be said. However, you already have all you need to get started. Read the Psalms. They are a great pattern of prayer. Study the great prayers in the New Testament, especially the ones that Paul prays for His people. All of these things will help you deepen your dialogue with Father God in Christ.



Just as we implemented “Hearing and Seeing” all throughout Phase 1 of MilktoMeat, so also we implemented Prayer in Phase 2!

\* A great exercise that you can complete in a short time is to read through the Letter to the Ephesians and take note of all Paul’s prayers in that letter. Copy them out and fit them all together in one, continuous prayer. That will give you a great pattern to follow in your own prayers.

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## WORDwork | Day 3

### 5.3 **Spiritual Exercise 3: Serving (Following)**

In many Christian circles there is a lot of emphasis given to the first two exercises, but not much given to this third: *selfless service*. This one, however, binds the other two together and gives them life—a *body to live in*. The Lord does not want us to sit in our dark corner praying and studying all the time. These exercises actually prepare us to go out and present the reality of who Christ is in the world.

As we serve others self-sacrificially as Christ has served us, we give them an experience, a taste of His goodness and beauty. *Prayer and study that is not expressed in service usually becomes cold, sterile and unfulfilling*. It is our Christlike, loving, gracious service that gives shape to our hope and makes our faith alive and active.

#### 5.3.1 **How Did Jesus Model Service?**

**Mark 10:45** For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

In His own life and ministry, the Lord Jesus modeled this activity over all others: *service*. He defined the core of His mission in the statement above from Mark 10. This basic pattern and attitude of service is one that is modeled clearly in the life of the Master and so we, as His students, are called to follow in His footsteps.

The concept of service dominates the landscape of the New Testament. Peter, John, James, Paul often refer to themselves in “servant” and “slave” terms throughout the letters:

**Romans 1:1** From Paul, a **slave of Christ Jesus**, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.

**James 1:1** From James, a **slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ**, to the twelve tribes dispersed abroad. Greetings!  
(Remember that this James was Jesus half-brother!!!)

At the end of Matthew, Jesus warns His first disciples very sternly about seeking places of *honor* and *privilege*. These things can often lead to pride which is not in line with the Way of Jesus.



**Matthew 23:8-12** Now you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. 23:9 And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. 23:10 Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. 23:11 **The greatest among you shall be your servant.** 23:12 Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Jesus' main point in all of this is that we should not do the things we do in order to seek places of power and praise from other people. Instead, we are to remember that we are all walking together following the lead of our One True Master and Teacher—Jesus. Since He serves us, we should serve one another.

**The way of service is the Way of the Kingdom.** To be great in Father God's eyes, we must become servants of all. This requires *humility*—realizing who we are and who The Lord is. It requires us to let go of our need for praise from others and do the works of a servant that will gain us praise from Father God.

### 5.3.2 **Service Displays And “Proves” Our True Love.**

Serving others is the ultimate expression of our love. Remember, Jesus teaches us that love for God and love for others are the foundational and key commandments, they are the very heart of the Lord's wise instruction to us:

**Mark 12:28–31** Now one of the experts in the law ... asked [Jesus], “Which commandment is the most important of all?” 12:29 Jesus answered, “The most important is: ‘Listen, Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 12:30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ 12:31 The second is: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ **There is no other commandment greater than these.**”

So we have two foundational commandments here: 1) Love the Lord God, and 2) Love your “Neighbor” as yourself. Most people know those well. But, our Master does not stop there however:

**Luke 6:27–29, 35-36** “... I say to you who are listening: **Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,** 6:28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ... 6:35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because He is kind to ungrateful and evil people. 6:36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”



What we are touching on here are really the “*meat*” truths of discipleship. In order to follow Christ faithfully, *we must come to realize that He is transforming us into people that have little concern for getting our way in life; instead we are more concerned about serving others so that they can become the people that God desires for them to be, even—and maybe especially—those who we see as our enemies.*

In some of the last instruction that Jesus gives to the first disciples, He tells them this:

**John 13:34–35** “I give you a new commandment—to love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 13:35 **Everyone will know by this that you are my disciples—if you have love for one another.**”

Later He repeats this command and adds to it:

**John 15:12-14** “This is my commandment, **that you love one another as I have loved you.** 15:13 **Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.** 15:14 You are my friends if you do what I command you.

Think on that: *Jesus desires that we love one another as He has loved us!* As we are growing in both the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, we begin to realize the high standard He places before us. And take note: *this love for one another is what uniquely set us apart as HIS students/disciples.* It is our love for one another that presents the reality of Jesus to the world that is watching.

It is also very important to remember that we serve the One True God who is seeking to transform His enemies into His children through love and grace. We were once His enemies, but now, by His mercy and love, He has drawn us to Himself (see Romans 5:6-11). Our King and His Kingdom gains victory not in destroying His enemies, but by transforming them by His grace. That is the mission now. There is a future day of wrath coming, but now, through us, the Lord is calling a rebellious world to Himself through His love.

Only self-sacrificial love can transform the heart of an enemy. Love is the most powerful reality on Earth. Jesus leads us in His type of true love and as we follow Him, we give our lives to realize and express this love.



Is selfless service something that characterizes your life? Pray, asking the Lord to help you in all the ways that you could love and serve better. Ask Him to make you aware of the opportunities to serve when they appear.

**WORDwork | Day 4**

5.4

**How Do We Follow The Example Of The Lord Jesus?**

In the last hours before His crucifixion, Jesus literally took on the role of a humble servant and washed the disciples' feet. You can read this whole episode in John 13:1-17. Today we are going to work through parts of this passage that focus on Jesus example for us.

**John 13:1** Just before the Passover Feast, Jesus knew that his time had come to depart from this world to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now loved them to the very end. 13:2 The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, that he should betray Jesus.

13:3 Because Jesus knew that the Father had handed all things over to him, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, 13:4 he got up from the meal, removed his outer clothes, took a towel and tied it around himself. 13:5 He poured water into the washbasin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to dry them with the towel he had wrapped around himself.

Most of this narrative is self explanatory. John wants to make sure that we can visualize being in this place with Jesus and His disciples in the last hours before His crucifixion. Instead of Jesus being served *by* His students, He serves them.

Jesus' actions are rooted in His **identity**; He knew who He IS. He knew where He had come from and where He was heading. He knew that the Father has entrusted all things into His care. Because of this *deep rooted identity*, Jesus is free of pride, desire for self achieved power,

We know from the other accounts of this "Last Supper"—which is really the *first* New Passover for New Era—the disciples were bickering and arguing over who would be greatest in the Kingdom (see Luke 22:24). *Jesus washes their feet*. Judas has already taken steps, through Devilish inspiration, to sell Jesus to his enemies for the price of a slave gored by an ox (see Exodus 21:32). *Jesus washes His betrayer's feet*. Jesus performs the most humble service to those who at that time did not "get it" and also to His enemy. Jesus has taught on these things earlier; *now He embodies these truths in His actions*. He then explains:

**John 13:12** So when Jesus had washed their feet and put his outer clothing back on, he took his place at the table again and said to them,

“Do you understand what I have done for you? 13:13 You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and do so correctly, for that is what I am. 13:14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, **you too ought to wash one another’s feet.** 13:15 **For I have given you an example—you should do just as I have done for you.**

Jesus begins His ministry to his first disciples with the penetrating question: **“What do you want?”** (John 1:37-38). Everyone who would follow Jesus must consider this question. *Why are we following Jesus? What do we want from Him?* That question can only be truly understood and answered by this last question: *“Do you understand what I have done for you?”* As we have already heard, Jesus did not come to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45). Jesus loved us to point of giving His life for us.

Jesus washes His disciple’s feet to give them a living example of the greatest virtue in The Kingdom: *Love expressed in self-sacrificial service.* We are called to do for one another what Jesus has done for us. Then the core truth:

**John 13:16** I tell you the solemn truth, the slave is not greater than his master, nor is the one who is sent as a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 13:17 If you understand these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Our Master and Lord is also our *Servant*. He has served us all in ways that we could not care for ourselves. To *claim* to follow Jesus and then to demand “your way” or “your rights” means that you have not understood the core truth of who Jesus is and that you have not taken on “His way.” Again, the words of Jesus are right to the point: “Everyone will know by this that you are my disciples—if **you have love for one another**” (John 13:35). *If we do not have love for one another, we cannot claim to be Jesus true students, disciples.*

Love that reveals itself in self sacrificial service is the ultimate expression of who Jesus is and who His disciples should desire to be. If we do not have love, we have nothing (see 1 Corinthians 13:1-3). John even tells us in his first letter that anyone who claims to love God but hates his brother is a liar (1 John 4:20-21).

We see here the high calling we have from Jesus. Loving others, and especially our enemies, is something that does not come “naturally” to us. In fact, the sin that dwells within us rebels against this notion continually. This is why we need the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us. If we want to love and serve as Jesus did, The Spirit will enable and empower us to do so.



We have covered a lot this week. As we close, take a few minutes to think about that question from Jesus: *“What do you want?”* Jesus is leading you to become a self sacrificial servant of all. *Is that truly what you want?*

# Session 6

## What Are Some Supporting Spiritual Practices And Attitudes?

- Core Truth:** There are many things that we can do to help us focus on the Lord and His work in and through us. These practices have been proven throughout time to be helpful to the faithful.
- To Remember:** “[We] have not ceased praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding... [Colossians 1:9]
- Objective:** We want to explore some secondary or supporting practices and attitudes to help you explore ways to deepen your walk with the Lord. All of these can be cultivated as habits and patterns of thought and action in every facet of our lives.
- Prayer:** *Father God, thank you for your Word and all that you have given me to know You better. Help me to work out a way of life that allows me to make you central to all that I am and do. Amen.*

## WORDwork | Day 1

*Supporting exercises* are things we may do alongside the core exercises in order to help us focus our efforts. Some of these are actually *attitudes*—*internal postures* of our mind, a certain way of thinking about things. We will explore three supporting exercises/attitudes that come alongside each of the three core exercises. We have grouped these supporting exercises with the Core Exercises that they seem to support, but again we remind you that there is *no set formula* for this. *It takes time and experimentation to see what works best for you.*

### 6.1 Exercises/Attitudes To Support Hearing And Seeing

#### 6.1.1 What is Meditation and Memorization?

##### Psalms 119:27

Help me to understand what your precepts mean!

Then I can **meditate** on your marvelous teachings.

For some, the word meditation is a bad word. It is often associated with eastern mysticism and new age practices that are *hollow* and *deceptive*. Nevertheless, it is also a biblical concept and we are encouraged to meditate on The Word, making it part of our “internal reality.” Meditation is simply *focusing deeply* on the Lord God’s Word to us.

You could think of meditation in 3 stages: 1) Simply *reading* and *joyfully accepting Scripture* as The Word of God, 2) *Studying* the text to understand what it means, and 3) *Pondering* or “chewing” on what you have learned, asking, “How does this Truth shape me?”

As in Psalm 119 above, *true meditation follows understanding the text*. The Psalmists asks for understanding so that he may then meditate on what he has learned. *Studying* the text is vitally important and beyond the scope of this introduction to dig into. For now, realize that we want to meditate on truth received as *God’s Word*, not on our own thoughts. Study helps us to make sure that we are understanding what Father God has given us.

In meditation, we *consciously and intentionally slow down*. We don’t read merely to be reading. We are not reading through 4 or 5 chapters of the Bible. We pick a single short passage and live with it, *ponder* it for a time. We engage it with all of our senses. ***We are seeking to get the Word into us, not merely get into the Word.***

In Psalm 1:2, we hear that the “Blessed person,” “**delights** in the Instruction of the Lord, and on His Instruction he **meditates** day and night.” The word that is translated “meditates” is the Hebrew term “to murmur, or mutter.” It is the “mmmmmm” sound we make when eating something delicious. It is the “hmmmmm” sound we make when we are thinking hard. When we meditate, we are enjoying the *tastiness* of the Lord’s Word. Like Mary, we *treasure* the Word, *pondering* it in our hearts (see Luke 2:19, 51). *That is the essence of meditation.*

All of this implies that we may wish to **memorize** parts of Scripture so that we can take it with us to ponder. For many, memorizing Scripture leads them to a new level of growth and fruitfulness.

*Often meditation brings us a blinding flash of the obviously profound.* By obviously profound I mean that we start to see the Word connecting with the truths that are before us everyday but have been blocked from our awareness by our busyness or distraction. As we think about, “chew on”, ruminate on God’s truth we begin to see wisdom take shape in our thoughts and attitudes.

#### 6.1.2 **What Is Silence?**

##### **Psalm 131:2 (ESV)**

But I have calmed and quieted my soul,  
like a weaned child with its mother;  
like a weaned child is my soul within me.  
3 O Israel, hope in the LORD  
from this time forth and forevermore.

“I have calmed and *quieted* my soul...” This may be one of the most difficult things for us to do. Yet of these supporting exercises, this one may be the foundation upon which the others build. In our face-paced, deafening culture we may need to arrange for times of silence as well as developing an *attitude, or interior posture* of silence. Notice in the Psalm above, the Psalmist has “quieted” his soul like a “weaned child with its mother...” The image here is of a baby sleeping peacefully on its mother’s lap with a full belly. Because Father God provides for us and watches over us, we too can find calm and peace.

Two things we can do in this area: *turn off* and *unplug*. We have TV’s, radios, iPods, etc., which can inundate us with a constant stream of *noise* and *static*. With this constant distraction, it is very difficult to “plug in” to Father God. When we find ways to be silent, we posture ourselves to hear the Lord better.

In verse 1 of Psalm 131, the Psalmist says he has not set his mind on things too far above him. We will say something about that first verse tomorrow. Instead,

he has calmed and quieted his soul. When we receive the Father's provision and cultivate a sense of always being in His presence as He keeps company with us and watches over us, we find hope, healing and restoration. We find satisfaction for our souls.



See if you can find a place to sit for 15 to 30 minutes in silence. No music, noise, chatter, etc. Take this time to reflect on what you are learning and what the Lord is teaching you.

### 6.1.3 What Is Solitude / Abstinence?

**Matthew 14:23** And after he (Jesus) sent the crowds away, he went up the mountain **by himself to pray**. When evening came, he was there alone.

Practicing solitude can enhance both our Hearing and Praying exercises. For some of us, we need solitude—*alone time*—in order to have *silence*. Jesus went out alone to pray on several occasions. Being around others can often hinder us from focusing on our *personal* relationship with Father God. We all need time to ourselves, *for ourselves*. This is not a negative selfish act; *it is something we do so that we can be our best self for the sake of others*.

Solitude can take many forms. We may go for a walk or set aside some time during the day to be alone. We may decide that we need a longer time, maybe several days to get alone with the Father. All of this will have to be planned for and worked out in the context of our family and job responsibilities.

For those of us who are married, we may also set aside special times to focus on prayer undistracted by our natural and good desires. In 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 says that those who are married can abstain from sexual activity for a time agreed upon in order to focus on prayer. .

This exercise of abstinence may not be limited to sexual things, it may also include other forms of pleasure that we decide to abstain from in order to devote our minds to God completely. We can abstain from TV. We can abstain from music. We can abstain from a number of things *that are not bad in themselves* if used properly. The Spirit will guide us as we explore practicing these types of things.

In short, the practice of solitude creates space in the flow of our life for our main responsibility: cultivating our life with Father God in Christ through the Holy Spirit.



Is solitude something that would help you in your spiritual life? If so, think about *simple* ways to implement this.



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**WORDwork | Day 2****6.2 Exercises/Attitudes To Support Prayer****6.2.1 What Is Simplicity?****Psalms 131:1-2 (ESV)**

O LORD, my heart is not lifted up;  
my eyes are not raised too high;  
I do not occupy myself with things  
too great and too marvelous for me.

Prayer is something that should be cultivated *in the flow of life* and not apart from it. It can become something we do *constantly throughout the day* and not just at one special time during the day. In this way, a pattern of life is established—a *habit of prayer*. In order for this pattern to shape into habit, we have to keep things simple.

In seeking to lead a simple life, we are giving priority to things that are “first things”—the *eternally significant* things—and putting lesser things in their proper place or eliminating them all together. Godly voices from the past encourage us to put away anything which does not lead us to Father God.

For many of us, simplicity starts with slowing down, moving at a pace that allows us to be aware of the Lord’s presence and grace. We have time to *realize* that Christ and the Father are always present with us through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Because the Father and Son are *with* us, we bring them into all things—our joys, our fears, our worries, our hopes—knowing that all things are under their *providential* and *sovereign* guidance. The simple truth is that because Christ is over all things, you don’t have to worry and fret over how everything is going to work out.

In Psalm 131 above, the Psalmist begins with a confession that he has not set his sights too high; in *humility* he keeps his eyes on the things that are right in front of him. He has put an end to his *pride* that would tempt him to always be looking for more success, more self-gratification. He does not occupy himself with things that are too far beyond his reach.

In our times, we are faced with extraordinary pressures that can easily distract us from eternally significant things. We cannot withdraw from our World; in fact, we are called to engage it. Cultivating a simple life simply means getting



rid of all that distracts us in order to make time and space to hear the Lord, see His glory, and respond in thanks and praise in all circumstance for all things.



Take a minute and think about things that distract you from more important things. How can you get rid of them or lessen their ability to distract you?

### 6.2.2 What Is Confession & Counsel?

**Proverbs 12:15**      The way of a fool is right in his own eyes,  
But a wise man is he who listens to counsel.

This supporting exercise is a big one. As we hear the Lord's Word for us and we follow the pattern of TURN > TRUST > FOLLOW, we very quickly learn that we cannot do this alone. Each of us needs at least one *trusted, wise, spiritually mature* brother or sister in Christ to share our struggles, our fears, and our failures. This may sound scary to some. However, when done well, we will be "bearing one another's burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

As we are confronted with the Word it will encourage us in some areas. Yet it will also point out areas where we need some *healing, restoration, and transformation*. As the Spirit uses the Word, we become of ways in which we have gone off THE Way and need correction or reproof/rebuke to help us get back on The Way. As we share our weaknesses, failures and sins with another trusted and wise brother or sister, we can then receive their counsel from the Word with gratitude realizing that we are all walking together, following Christ our Master.

James tells us, "So *confess your sins to one another* and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great effectiveness" (James 5:16). In this context, James is giving instruction to those who are sick. This may seem very un-modern, but the Scriptures make a clear link between sickness and sin.

We know that not all sickness is caused by particular acts of sin. But keeping things "bottled up" or worse, hidden, can affect us deeply. Bitterness, holding grudges, feelings of shame and guilt, can all be things that cause both spiritual sickness and even physical ailments. Speaking openly about our sin, weakness, and failures and receiving wise council and encouragement supports a faithful and fruitful way of life. Following the Way of Jesus, we keep our "good works" *secret* and *speak openly* of our failures.



Here, we have focused on confessing our sins to one another. The questions almost always comes up, "But what about confessing our sins to God, specifically 1 John 1:9?" We have a longer treatment of that in the appendix and you can read the dialogue we have there to dig deeper.

**6.2.3 What Is Worship (Celebration, Gratitude, Praise)?**

**Revelation 15:4** Who will not fear you, O Lord, and glorify your name, because you alone are holy? All nations will come and worship before You for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

As we hear God’s Word more clearly, more deeply, we will respond in *gratitude* for His goodness and grace. His joy will become our joy as we realize the soul satisfaction that comes from our participation in the glorious life of the Father and Son by the presence of the Spirit.

Consider the words of William Temple:

“Worship is the submission of all of our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness, nourishment of mind by His truth, purifying of imagination by His beauty, opening of the heart to His love, and submission of will to His purpose. All this gathered up in adoration is the greatest expression of which we are capable.”

There are many today who crave a worship “experience” and so they hope that the right kind of music, the right atmosphere, etc. will help them have a worship experience. *Worship in the Bible is something we do, not something that is done to us.* Worship is the celebration of the goodness of our Lord God in the total submission of all our heart, soul, mind, body to Him.

Worship begins by *centering* on Father God working in Christ through the Holy Spirit. We *rejoice* that we have been called up into their life. We *delight* in them and our relationship with them. We choose a life of *gratitude* and *thanksgiving* because all things are working together for our good. These are the types of things that cultivate worship and celebration.

It may come as a surprise, but one of the key things Jesus offers His students is *joy*.

**John 15:11** I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you,  
and your joy may be complete.

As we take on the Way of Jesus, His joy becomes our joy and out of this joy we can truly worship and celebrate and ultimately serve others.



Think about all that you have read today:

1) Think of specific ways you might implement some of these practices into your daily/weekly habits. 2) Ask the Lord to help you figure out what you can do to make your walk with Him more deep and satisfying.

## WORDwork | Day 3

### 6.3 Exercises/Attitudes To Support Service

#### 6.3.1 What Is Submission?

**Ephesians 5:18-21\*** And do not get drunk with wine, which is debauchery, but allow yourselves to be overflowing in the Spirit, by 19 1) speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, 2) singing and making music in your hearts to the Lord, 20 3) always giving thanks to God the Father for each other in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 4) and **submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ...**

Before any service can actually take place, there has to be *submission*. Very simply stated, submission is the act of accepting and yielding to the desire and will of someone else; *it is acting for the sake of another*. This, of course, is built upon the attitude of *humility*.

In John 6:38, Jesus says, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.” Jesus the Son submitted to the will and desires of His Father. His submission becomes the model for us all. If the One who created us can submit, then so can we. If our master was characterized by humility, so can we be.

In the Ephesians passage above, we see that one of the ways that we exhibit the *overflowing presence of the Spirit* is by “submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.” The Spirit has been given to us to shape Christ in us. As He does this, we become submissive just as Jesus was. We must always remember that service is the Way of the Kingdom; the greatest is the Servant of all (see Mark 9:35).

The Body of Christ, the Church, should be a place where we are all *mutually submitting to one another* as we all submit to Christ our Lord. When we each focus on one another rather than on ourselves, our needs are met and the Body grows itself in love.

When we are not enslaved to having our way, putting ourselves first, we become truly *free*. Humility and submission open the doors to grace and love.



In the New Testament letters, there are several “one another” passages, instructing us in what we should do for one another. Take a minute to look a few of these up and read them: Romans 12:10, 15:5-7; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Ephesians 4:32

**6.3.2 What Is Secrecy?**

**Matthew 6:2-6** Thus whenever you do charitable giving, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in synagogues and on streets so that people will praise them. I tell you the truth, they have their reward. 3 But when you do your giving, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your gift may be in secret. **And your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you.**

5 “Whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, ... 6 But whenever you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. **And your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you...**

18 When you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to others when you are fasting, but only to your Father who is in secret. **And your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you.**

Very little needs to be said about this passage. We can simply take it at face value. **Secrecy is one of the virtues of the Kingdom.** Now, there is a negative and toxic form of secrecy in which we try to “hide” from one another—especially in terms of our failures and sins. **In the Body of Christ, we speak openly about our failures and hide our good works.** In this way, the focus is kept continually on the Lord God who is working in and through us for the sake of His good pleasure.

By serving in secrecy, we also avoid the temptation to **pride**. When we begin to seek the praise of people rather than the praise of The Lord, we are on the fast path to spiritual ruin. By serving with the realization that The Lord is our only “audience” we are entrusting our lives into His care; He will see, He will notice and that is all that really matters.

**6.3.3 What is Fasting?**

Jesus fasted. The early church fasted. Many followers of Christ throughout the centuries have practiced fasting. Fasting is simply deciding to abstain from eating for a period of time in order to focus on your relationship with Father God in Christ through the Spirit. When we fast, we experience the reality that our lives *originate* and are *rooted* in the spiritual, not the physical. When we fast, we are following the principle that our Master Jesus stated Himself: “It is written, ‘**Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God**’” (Matthew 4:4).

Fasting has been used in the life of Father God’s people to remove physical distractions, to bring the body into submission to the spirit, and to help focus the

heart and mind on the reality of God's work within us. Food is important for our health and well being, but it is not more important than submitting ourselves to Father God in all things. Consider what Jesus says about this:

**John 4:31-34** ...the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something."

32 But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." 33 So the disciples began to say to one another, "No one brought him anything to eat, did they?"

34 Jesus said to them, "**My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to complete his work.**"

Jesus considered that doing the will of God and completing His mission and work were as "soul-sustaining" as food is "life-sustaining." When we fast, we abstain from things that are normally *necessary* for life. We are training our minds to realize that God's desire and purpose is even more important than these necessary things.

One other passage may be significant in this context:

**Acts 13:1-3** Now there were these prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch... 2 While they were **serving 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 they had **fasted and prayed** and placed their hands on them, they sent them off.

Notice that the church at Antioch was "serving" the Lord as they were fasting. The term "serving" could also be translated "worshipping"—if you remember, the two go hand in hand. What is important to see is that the Holy Spirit speaks to this church as they are practicing worship, fasting and prayer *together*.

It is beyond the scope of this study to deal with fasting in depth. For many, fasting is the most radical of all the supporting exercises. However, it was practiced by Jesus, the early church, and countless brothers and sisters throughout the years. For those who practice it, fasting can enhance our ability to focus on the Lord and His provision.

**A word of caution:** *fasting does have physical effects and should be carefully considered before attempting it.* I would encourage you to do some more research on this practice and talk to your doctor to make sure this will not have negative effects.



In all that we have discussed today, what practices do think could help you the most? What are some simple ways you might implement them?

**WORDwork | Day 4**6.4 **How Can We Implement The Exercises Practically?**

As we close out this week, I thought it might be helpful to share some of my own experience in experimenting and figuring out how these things work for me. First of all, a visual:



This graphic is meant to help you visualize the exercises and practices so that you can think about some of the ways that they relate together. This representation is *one way* that these make sense to me. The three core, main exercises are the pivot points that link all the others together. The supporting actions and attitudes are there to help support and connect the core ones. All of these are interrelated and as you experiment, you will figure out what works best for you.

6.4.1 **Some Practical Ideas: The Time Budget**

One piece of the puzzle that we have already introduced briefly is *time*. Spiritual growth to maturity takes *time*. An important aspect of time is learning how to manage it well. Each week, we have 7 days and 24 hours in each day. That is 168 hours each week. *That is all the time that is available to each of us.* That is also all the time that Jesus had each week and He was able to accomplish the Father's desires for Him in that time. So can we.

In the time that is available to us, we need to *prioritize* what we are going to do. In my own experience, I rank things in this order:

- 1) Rest,
- 2) Relationship with Father God and "alone time",
- 3) Relationship with Family and Responsibilities,
- 4) Relationships with Brothers and Sisters in Christ,



### 5) Relationships with all others.

It may seem odd to put rest first on this list. The reality is, *if you are not getting enough rest, everything else will tend to fall apart*. So, you have to figure out how much sleep and rest you need in order to function well. In the Creation narrative in Genesis, the 7th Day of God's rest is the only thing that was pronounced *holy* and later the Hebrews were commanded to set this day apart as a day of rest. Rest is a way that we experience the grace and care of Father God.

Next comes keeping up with relationships. Of first importance is our relationship with Father God. Give Him your best time, when you are able to be most focused and rested. For me this is in the morning. This is when I do most of my reading, studying, listening, and praying. It may be different for you.

Then comes our close family relationships and all the responsibilities that go along with them like jobs and such. After that our brothers and sisters in Christ and then all others. There is a lot to be said about this and we will touch on some of it in our next study unit.

#### 6.4.2 **Practicing Hearing and Seeing**

My main vocation centers around study and meditation on God's Word in order to teach and train others. Nevertheless, I still have to set aside time to focus on hearing from the Lord without distraction. I need to be away from others, in a quiet space, without any noise and distractions to do this well. I find that the morning is the best time for me to do this before I become mentally tired.

#### 6.4.3 **Practicing Praying**

This one has been the most challenging for me. I recently discovered two things that have helped: 1) when I am doing "mindless" things—driving in the car, working outside, etc.—I find it is easy for me to focus on prayer. I can't just sit still, in the quiet, and focus on prayer, which leads to 2) when I am "busy," working with my hands, I find it easier to focus on prayer. What I find is that "external work" helps me quiet my inner self. You will need to discover what works for you.

#### 6.4.4 **Practicing Service**

Again, start serving those who are closest to you: parents, wife, husband, children. If we are not loving the people who are closest to us well, it is unlikely we are serving others well. If you are willing, The Lord will open many opportunities for serving others: *keep your eyes and ears open*.



We have purposefully tried to stay away from **prescribing** things for you to do. You will have to spend time trying out new things and experimenting to see what works best for you.

# Session 7

## How Can We Be Sure We Are Faith-Full And Fruitful?

**Core Truth:** Father God has granted us, gifted us, everything we need to live life “In Christ.” In order to be faithful and fruitful, we need to build on the faith that has been granted to us.

**To Remember:** “...His divine power has bestowed on us everything necessary for life and godliness...” [2 Peter 1:3]

**Objective:** The Spiritual Exercises are not ends in themselves. They are things we can do to create space in our souls for the grace of Father God to shape us to be more like Christ. As we grow to be spiritually mature, we will be filled with more and more of the character of Christ, shaped by His goodness and grace.

**Prayer:** *Father God, thank You for giving me everything that is necessary for life and godliness. Help me to grow in the grace and deep, personal knowledge of our Lord Jesus. Amen.*



## WORDwork | Day 1

### 7.1 What Has Father God Granted Us And How Do We Respond?

This week we are going to focus on most of 2 Peter 1. In this helpful but complex passage, Peter gives us some of the most important truths related to spiritual growth and maturity. To get started, carefully read through this whole passage in your bible. Then come back and we will work through it over the course of this week.

**2 Peter 1:1–11** From Simeon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ, have been granted a faith just as precious as ours. 1:2 May grace and peace be lavished on you **as you grow in the rich knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord!**

1:3 I can pray this because **His divine power has bestowed on us everything necessary for life and godliness through the rich knowledge** of the one who called us by his own glory and excellence.

? 33 What has been granted to us through the righteousness of God and Christ?

? 34 What does Peter pray that we grow in?

? 35 What has been bestowed on us through Father God's divine power?

In this passage, we see two key “ingredients” of spiritual formation presented: 1) Father God's **grace and provision**, and 2) our **response**. If you know Peter's story from the Gospels, you will see how what Peter says here comes out of his own experience with the Lord Jesus. First of all, notice how Peter refers to himself as a “slave and apostle of Jesus Christ.” That should get your attentions based on our previous discussions of *service* and *humility*.

### 7.1.1 **How Has Our Faith Been Granted?**

Peter begins with DEEP TRUTH: “...to those who have been **granted** a faith just as precious as ours...” What does the phrase “been granted” mean? Remember this is Peter who knew the Lord Jesus personally when he was on the earth. Peter was one of Jesus’ key disciples. This is Peter who made the great confession to Jesus, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.” And immediately after he said this, Jesus said, “You are blessed, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father in heaven! (see Matthew 16:17).

God the Father was the one who “opened” Peter’s eyes to be able to see who Jesus truly is. In this sense, it was “granted” or “given” to Peter—He did not come to this truth on his own. Also, Peter did not do anything to earn or deserve this favor; it was simply given to him. This is the essence of Father God’s grace that grants us all that we need.

These ideas show up Paul’s letters as well: “For it has been *granted* to you not only to *believe* in Christ but also to *suffer for Him*,...” (Philippians 1:29). In Ephesians 2, we hear: “*For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, all of this is the gift of God*” (Ephesians 2:8). All that we have in terms of our spiritual life (*all of our life, in fact*) has been *given to us by Father God*, even our ability to express faith—belief, trust in Christ.

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**Key Realization:** Everything that we have has been given to us.

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Notice also that Peter says that our faith is “*just as precious*” as his and the other Apostles! The word “precious” here means “of equal value or honor.” Peter was set apart for uniquely significant work by the Lord Jesus. But our faith is just as *valuable* and *honorable* as his!

### 7.1.2 **What Is Rich Knowledge Of Father God And Christ?**

Notice that all of this has been given to us through “the **rich knowledge** of God and Jesus Christ... the one who called us...” This phrase “rich knowledge” is just one word in Greek but needs to be translated with a couple of words into English. The best way to understand this “knowledge” is that is it not just knowing *about* someone, it is *knowing someone truly, deeply, and personally*. This is the way you know someone when you are invited into their “inner circle” of friends or if you were welcomed into their family.

This deep, rich, personal knowledge is of Father God and of Jesus our Lord (see verses 2, 3, 8). They have called us into their fellowship, their “inner circle” and now we can know them *personally, intimately*! Knowing the Lord God deeply

and personally is the means by which He has made and is making His power available to us.

God has called us into this personal relationship with Him. Take note of the end of verse 3: “the One who called us by His own *glory* and *excellence*.” We are going to talk more about this over the next couple of days. Just realize that God has called you to take part in His way of life—one that is defined by *glory* and *excellence*.

To back track just for a second, look in verse 1 again. There we hear that God granted our faith to us “through the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” Two things to observe here. First, all of these things come to us by way of Christ’s righteousness. We would have none of these things if Christ had not fulfilled His mission here on earth. God has given us what He has given us for Jesus’ sake. Secondly, notice how Jesus is referred to here: “our God and Savior.” The Greek grammar very clearly labels Jesus as God here. This is one of the clearest statements of Jesus being God in the whole New Testament.

### 7.1.3 What Is Father God’s Divine Power?

Peter also tells us, “His divine power has bestowed (granted/given) on (to) us everything necessary for life and godliness...” *By* and *in* His power, God has given us everything that we need both *to live life* and to be *godly*. “Godliness” is living our lives in a way that is pleasing to Father God.

Father God has given you everything you need, *even your faith*, to be the person that He desires for you to be! You really should reflect on that statement for a few minutes. As you face today’s challenges, you already have everything you need! As you face today’s opportunities, you already have everything you need! This is an absolutely amazing truth that we will spend the rest of our lives realizing. All of this is an example of God’s *grace*—His unearned favor given to us freely in Christ.

As we have already discussed in previous sessions, *we have access to the very power that raised our Lord Jesus from the dead that enables us to live a new kind and way of life* (see Romans 6:4, Ephesians 1:18-21). Peter is touching on that idea here with the phrase “His divine power.” And don’t miss his key point: His divine power comes to us **THROUGH** our deep, personal, relationship with Father God in Christ!



Think about all that you have read today. What is your immediate reaction to it all? Do you really believe that Father God has granted you all these things?

**WORDwork | Day 2****7.2 How Do We Partake Of The Divine Nature?**

**2 Peter 1:4** Through these things (Father God's *glory* and *excellence*) He has bestowed on us his precious and most magnificent promises, so that by means of what was promised you may become partakers of the divine nature, after escaping the worldly corruption that is produced by evil desire.

1:5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith excellence, to excellence, knowledge; 1:6 to knowledge, self-control; to self-control, perseverance; to perseverance, godliness; 1:7 to godliness, brotherly affection; to brotherly affection, unselfish love. 1:8 For if these things are really yours and are continually increasing, they will keep you from becoming ineffective and unproductive in your pursuit of knowing our Lord Jesus Christ more intimately.

? 36 What has Father God bestowed on us through His "glory and excellence"?

? 37 Why or for what end goal did God give His promises to us?

? 38 What should we "make every effort" to do?

**7.2.1 What Is The Goal (Outcome)?**

2 Peter 1:4 is one of the most powerful sentences in the whole Bible. To understand it clearly, we are going to analyze it *topically* to follow the flow of Peter's thought. First, he gives us the goal that Father God has set for us in 1:4: that "*you might become partakers of the divine nature.*" Everything in this passage revolves around this goal, this outcome. So what does it mean to become a partaker of the "divine nature"?

Clearly, Peter is not saying that we will become “gods,” taking on *all* the *attributes* and *essence* of who the Lord God is. What he means is that *we will share in God’s nature, His way of life that is characterized by truth, goodness and glory/beauty*. Paul talks about this in terms of “becoming mature” and “growing up into Christ” or being “perfect/complete” (see Ephesians 4:13-15, Philippians 3:12, Colossians 1:28). He also speaks of Christ being “formed in us” (see Galatians 4:19). Many simply call this growing in and toward “*Christlikeness*.” We are being **transformed** by the Holy Spirit (see Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18) to be **conformed** to the likeness of Jesus Christ (see Romans 8:28-30).

### 7.2.2 How Do We Escape Worldly Corruption?

Peter tells us at the end of verse 4 that the goal of “partaking the divine nature” will take place *after* we have escaped “the worldly corruption that is produced by evil desire.” If you think back to our previous discussions, you will know that we have discussed the issue of *desire* often. Early in this unit, we discuss the struggle that is going on within us between the desires of the Spirit and the desires of the Flesh. *Our desires and how we act on them define us.*

If you think about your old way of life, you will probably see that many of things you thought and did were shaped by evil or sinful desires. Over the course of my journey, I have become convinced that Father God is transforming us most in the area of our *desires*. Think about it: your desires cannot be changed by a force of your will. If you don’t like chocolate ice cream, you can’t will yourself to like it. But if your desire is transformed, it opens up new opportunities to you.

As you should clearly understand now Father God is working in Christ through the Holy Spirit in us to transform us *from the inside out*. A huge part of that process involves changing our desires. This will affect every other aspect of our personality. Father God is working to transform our “evil desires” into “good desires.” *So how does He do that?*

### 7.2.3 What are Father God’s Precious and Magnificent Promises?

Peter is clear: we will become partakers of the divine nature **through** Father God’s “*precious and most magnificent promises*.” Peter speaks of promise again in 3:13 where he tells us God has also promised the coming of the New Heavens and the New Earth. In the New Testament, the concept of “God’s promises” shows up quite a bit and it points us to the promises given through Israel, realized in Christ, that work together to bring the blessings of The Kingdom. In 2 Corinthians 1:20, Paul tells us that *all* God’s promises find their “yes!” in Christ. In short, Father

God's promises include all that He has promised to do *for* us, *to* us and *in* us. It is *through* these promises that we are transformed.

#### 7.2.4 **What Is Father God's Glory And Excellence?**

Also, these promises come to us *through* Father God's own "glory and excellence." Both of these terms point to things that are *good* and *praiseworthy*. The Lord God's glory is His incomprehensible beauty made present to our senses that allows us to praise and worship Him. The word "excellence" could also be translated "goodness" but *excellence* works well in this context. All that the Lord God does is *morally* and *qualitatively* excellent. We are called to live in the same way. We will discuss this more tomorrow.

#### 7.2.5 **So What Do We Do?**

Even though Father God has given us everything we need, it takes *effort* to work it all out in our lives. This is something very important for you to realize. In 1:5, Peter encourages us to, "*make every effort* to add to your faith..." As we have touched on before, God's grace and empowerment can never be earned, but it does require some effort on our part to cultivate these blessings into the fabric of our lives.

Think about this question for a minute: "*Why doesn't God just immediately transform us at the very minute that we trust in Christ?*" Now I don't know that I can answer that question fully or adequately, but I think Peter gives us a clue in these verses. If Father God just instantly "zapped" us and made us instantly like Christ, we would not have learned or gained much. Even Jesus Himself "learned obedience through the things He suffered..." (Hebrews 5:8).

I am convinced that God wants us to *experience* His divine power in *the process of our transformation* so that we become people *who actually want* to think and act in ways that are true, good and glorious. In His wisdom, God our Father realizes that this can only be accomplished by taking us through the oftentimes painful process of transformation. *Growth and maturing need to be experienced so that their effects take deep root within us.*

So the question is still, "How do we do it?" or maybe "What does Father God desire for us to do?" Peter gives the answer in the very next verses. We will turn to look at the section in detail tomorrow.



Think about how your desires shape your life. Do you understand why the transformation of our desires is so critical to our overall transformation?

## WORDwork | Day 3

### 7.3 What Do We “Add To” Our Faith?

**2 Peter 1:5** For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith excellence, to excellence, knowledge; 1:6 to knowledge, self-control; to self-control, perseverance; to perseverance, godliness; 1:7 to godliness, brotherly affection; to brotherly affection, unselfish love.

Peter lists **seven virtues** that we should “*make every effort*” to add to our faith. We call these virtues because they are all things that are shaped by truth, goodness and beauty. If you think about it, these are the virtues that define Jesus’ Way of life. These are all *character qualities* that our Lord Jesus exhibits. At the end of this letter, Peter encourages to “grow in the *grace* and *knowledge* of our Lord Jesus Christ” (3:18). The way we do this is by *practicing* the character qualities, virtues that Jesus Himself lived. *By living with the same virtues that Jesus did, we get to know Him more deeply.*

#### 7.3.1 What Is Excellence?

The first virtue is *excellence*. If you look back to the end of verse 3 you see that God has called us by his own “glory and *excellence*.” This is a rare word in the New Testament, but it does show up in a couple of other places:

**Philippians 4:8** Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is worthy of respect, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if something is **excellent** or praiseworthy, think about these things.

**1 Peter 2:9** But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may proclaim the **excellencies** of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

The idea of “excellence” is large and draws in many things. You can simply think of it as all is true and good and worthy of honor and praise. In verse 3, the word is linked with God’s glory. We have spoken several times about the triad of Truth, Goodness/Justice, and Glory/Beauty. It seems that excellence displays these three things in all that we are and do. So in everything that we do, we should pursue *excellence*.



**7.3.2 What Is Knowledge?**

This word is different from the one that we have already seen which means “the deep, rich, personal knowledge” of someone. This is just *general knowledge*: learning more and more about The Lord, ourselves, and our place in the world. This is the same term that is used in the last verse of 2 Peter: “But grow in the grace and *knowledge* of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (3:18). As we are pursuing excellence, we need to grow in our knowledge of the Lord, His Word, and reality.

**7.3.3 What Is Self-Control?**

This same term shows up in Galatians 5:23 as one of the descriptions of the fruit of the Spirit. Now that we have access to the power of God’s Spirit, we have the ability to choose what is good, true and praise-worthy. We don’t have to let our corrupt passions and desires rule over us; we have the ability to use our bodies for the sake of God’s glory. This is self-control.

**7.3.4 What Is Perseverance?**

This term shows up quite a bit in the New Testament. It simply means to keep going, to keep moving forward, particularly in difficult circumstances:

**2 Thessalonians 1:4** ... we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and afflictions you are enduring.

Paul encourages us to think about the perseverance, the endurance of Jesus Himself:

**2 Thessalonians 3:5** Now may the Lord direct your hearts toward the love of God and the endurance of Christ.

*Jesus never gave up.* He stuck to His mission even to the point of death. Remember the words of Jesus, the Servant in Isaiah:

**Isiah 50:7** For the Lord GOD helps Me, Therefore, I am not disgraced;  
**Therefore, I have set My face like flint,**  
 And I know that I shall not be ashamed.

The writer of Hebrews likewise instructs us: “*For you need endurance in order to do God’s will and so receive what is promised*” (Hebrews 10:36). That is almost an understatement. In this world, where nothing works as it should and the forces of evil and darkness lurk at every turn, we are called to endure, to persevere, to not give up because we know how all things will be summed up in Christ.



### 7.3.5 What Is Godliness?

Godliness is simply living your life in such a way that reflects the character of the God you worship. It is living the way God himself would live if He were you. What would this look like? *Look at Jesus' life.* He lived as God in human skin. This word shows up several times in Paul's writings as well, particularly in his letters to Timothy. At one point Paul tells him,

**1 Timothy 4:7-8** ...train yourself for godliness. For “physical exercise has some value, but godliness is valuable in every way. It holds promise for the present life and for the life to come.”

### 7.3.6 What Is Brotherly Affection?

This Greek word will sound familiar to you: *philadelphia*. Philadelphia in Boston—“the city of brotherly love”—draws its name from this term. In the New Testament, this word specifically refers to our love and affection for our other brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul sums this one up well:

**1 Thessalonians 4:9** Now on the topic of brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.

### 7.3.7 What Is Unselfish Love And Why Is It The Final Virtue?

We have one virtue left and that is “unselfish love.” This is the most used word in the whole list, showing up some 116 times in the New Testament. You may have heard people speak of agapé (AH-gop-ay) love before. This is the Greek word used here. This type of love uniquely characterizes a disciple, a life-apprentice of Jesus: “**Everyone will know by this that you are my disciples—if you have love for one another**” (John 13:35)

Jesus defines this type of love in this way:

**John 15:12-13** My commandment is this—to love one another just as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this—that one lays down his life for his friends.

This unselfish, self-sacrificial love is the love that Jesus displayed for us when we gave Himself up for us all. There is no greater expression of love than this. *This is our last and highest virtue.* This is the type of love that transforms those who give it and those who receive it.



As you have considered these virtues today, which ones do you see present and growing in your life? Which one could use a little work?

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**WORDwork | Day 4****7.4 What Is The Outcome?**

**2 Peter 1:8-11** For if these things are really yours and are continually increasing, they will keep you from becoming ineffective and unproductive in your pursuit of knowing our Lord Jesus Christ more intimately. But concerning the one who lacks such things—he is blind. That is to say, he is nearsighted, since he has forgotten about the cleansing of his past sins.

1:10 Therefore, brothers and sisters, **make every effort** to be sure of your calling and election. For by doing this you will never stumble into sin. 1:11 For thus an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be richly provided for you.

Peter wants us to be very clear on why pursuing these virtues is so important: these character qualities make us *effective* and *productive* for Christ's sake. Do you want to know if you are growing in your spiritual life and in your relationship with Father God in Christ? Peter says we can look at the character of our lives and know if we are living in a way that is worthy of Christ.

Not only should these virtues be present in our lives, they should be *continually increasing*. This is to say that we should be “growing in” these virtues throughout our journey. We can pursue excellence and there will always be areas of our lives where we could be “more excellent.” This is true of all seven virtues. I think Peter expects us to let all of these virtues shape every aspect of our lives.

These virtues will make us more *effective* and *productive* in “*knowing* our Lord Jesus more *intimately*.” Here again we have the term that points to deep, personal knowledge of someone. This translation renders it as “*knowing...intimately*.” Our Father desires for our personal knowing of Jesus to work itself out in a life of “fruitfulness.” These virtues cultivate that fruitful type of life.

Peter also gives us a warning: “But concerning the one who lacks such things: he is blind—he is nearsighted, apparently forgetting about the cleansing of his previous sins” (2 Peter 1:9)

Later in this letter, Peter will be dealing with the destructive teachings of false teachers that had worked their way into the early churches. One of the things that they apparently taught was that if you “believed” in Jesus, then how you lived and behaved really did not matter. Peter is correcting this head on.

To trust in Christ is to understand that He is doing something to us: He and The Father, through the power and presence of their Spirit, are seeking to transform us *from the inside out*. What we do matters. The choices that we make matters. God has granted us all that we need to live a way of life that is pleasing to Him and satisfying to us but we have to cooperate in His grace and provision. There are ways that we should think and act that are in line with becoming more like Christ.

Peter gives us one more thing to “make every effort” to do: “*make every effort to be sure of your calling and election*” (1:10). As we have already discussed, many people have trouble with this “choosing” and “election” and “predestination” language that we see in the New Testament. Peter, as most of the ancients, realized that all of life is initiated by God. *Father God always makes the first move*. When we were still lost and rebellious, Jesus came to find us. When we were still God’s enemies, He invited us to become part of His family. God chooses to come to us, to find us, to cleanse us and to place us in His family.

*But how can I know if this is true about me?* Peter tells us in this passage. Take a look at our life: is it characterized by the pursuit of excellence, knowledge, self-control, etc. or by “the worldly corruption that is produced by evil desires.” Peter wants us to be sure where we stand. He wants to make sure that a “rich entrance” into The Kingdom is provided for us.

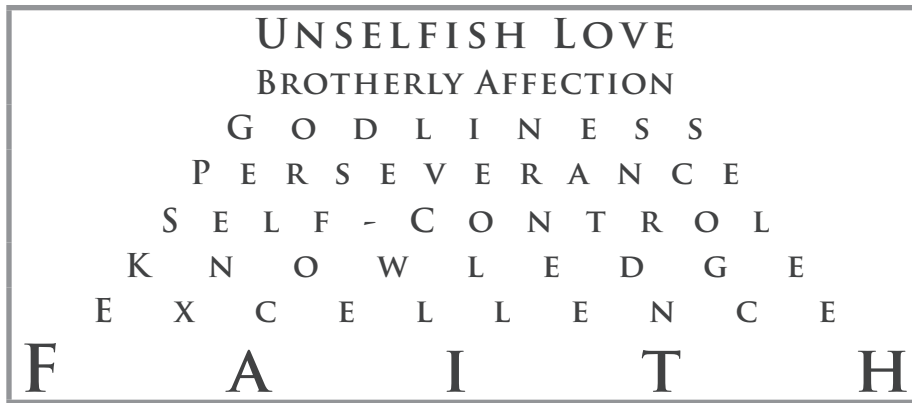
As we have already discussed, we each must stand before Christ’s judgment seat (see 2 Corinthians 5:10). By practicing the kinds of virtues Peter lists here, we can be assured that we will be fully pleasing to Christ on that day.

One final note on all of this: Peter is not giving us a formula for some type of works salvation. The things we have been exploring *are* things that we do, but they are things that we can do only as Father God is working in Christ through the Holy Spirit in us. These are not things that we do to earn salvation; these are things that *flow out* of our salvation. As we see these virtues in our lives and see them growing they give us confidence that we are heading the right Way.



A good exercise would be to see if you can figure out what the OPPOSITES of these Seven Virtues are. What is the opposite of excellence? Etc. This will help you clarify what these virtues are.

As Peter lays out these Virtues, it is clear that they are interlinked and inter-related: To faith, *add* excellence; to excellence *add* knowledge ... The idea seems to be that you can’t grow in knowledge unless you are first growing in excellence. This would make sense. One virtue builds on the foundation of another. Take a look at the following chart:



It is also important to note that we generally do not grow in these virtues at an equal pace, all at the same time. We may be growing by leaps and bounds in “knowledge” but still have work to do in “Godliness” and “Love.” The following chart illustrates this:



Again, there is no “formula” for spiritual growth. We hope that the material we have covered in this unit will help you hear the Father as He leads you in Christ to grow to Spiritual maturity. By learning to cooperate with Him, you will discover a pattern of life that will make you more *faithful* and *fruitful*.



Based on what you have learned this week, what virtues are growing in your life? Which ones need work? Pray, asking the Lord to help you in the areas where you need help.

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# Appendix

One of the questions that often comes up when practice of confession is discussed is, “How is confession related to forgiveness?” Specifically, many people think of 1 John 1:9. We have written a “dialogue” on this subject as we have found this is an effective way to engage a difficult topic in writing. If you have questions, we hope this will help you too.

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## The Issue: Confession and Forgiveness of Sin

Q I have a question about 1 John 1:9 which says, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins...”* Does this mean that we have to confess all our sins in order to be forgiven?

A This is a very good question and one that can be controversial. I assume that this is causing you some trouble if you are asking the question.

Q Yes it does. I mean, if I am really honest with myself, I sin a lot. So I would spend most of my time confessing sin. Also, what if I forget one? Does that mean it won't be forgiven?

A You are getting right to the heart of the issue. Some people say that this verse is referring to confessing our “known sins” - sins that we know about or feel some sense of guilt over.

Q But isn't sin, sin no matter whether I am aware of it or not. God knows. And John doesn't seem to make a distinction here between “known” and “unknown” sin. That just seems to confuse the whole issue.

A I would agree.

Q The real problem I am having is that this sounds like that there is something that I have to do in order to complete my salvation. Don't we believe and place our confidence in the reality that Jesus did everything that is necessary to be done for our salvation?

A Well let me start by saying that sin is a very serious issue. But let me also say that I am completely convinced that Jesus has dealt with our sin problem definitively, once for all, in His work on the Cross. I'll tell you what, let's just start with 1 John because I am convinced that John is not telling us that confession *causes* the forgiveness of our sins in any way. He is talking about a different relationship all together.

Q OK, I can't wait to hear this.

## The Context

- A First of all we need to understand why John writes this letter. If we read through the whole letter we hear that false teachers had come into the community. These teachers apparently denied that Jesus was the Messiah who had come as a real human being (see 4:1-6). As a result they also denied that He was the Son of God (see 2:22-23). Remember, when anyone rejects either Jesus humanity or His Deity—His “Godness”—the rest of their teaching is flawed as well.

So because they denied the fundamental truths about Jesus this had led them to untrue understanding about themselves and their relationship with God. From what John says these false teachers may have either been saying that they had reached a state of “sinless perfection” or that what a Christian does has no bearing on their spiritual lives.

In 2:26 John says, “I am writing these things for you concerning those who are trying to deceive you (lead you astray).” A little later he tells this assembly, “do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). Remember, everyone who is alive is being influenced by some spirit: either the Holy Spirit sent from the Father and Son or the “spirit of the world,” the spirit that is now “empowering the sons of disobedience” (see Ephesians 2:2). Every human teacher or leader is being led by one of these two realities. Does that make sense so far?

- Q Yeah, that makes sense. The last part about the spirits that are leading teachers and leaders is something that I have never really thought about before. I may have to ask a few questions about that.
- A I thought that might raise some questions. Let me just touch on how John deals with this issue in this specific letter. Take a look at this:

“By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses Jesus as the Christ who has come in the flesh is from God, 4:3 but every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God, and this is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming, and now is already in the world.” [1John 4:2-3]

Everyone who has the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ dwelling within them knows who Jesus truly is and confesses this—speaks about this truth publicly. The spirit of Antichrist opposes this truth. There is THE Antichrist who is coming. But now, his satanic work is already present in our world in the false teachers, the false prophets who are working to lead people away from the way of true life that Jesus gives us.

So now, in this letter, John is giving the church a set of tests that will reveal whether someone is a true teacher or a false teacher who is working according to

this deceptive and treacherous spirit of antichrist.

- Q OK, that helps a little bit and I can see how this is a much larger topic than what we want to deal with here. So let's bring that back to first John 1:9; how does all this relate together?
- A Let me just say that 1 John 1:5-10, which includes 1:9, are part of the tests that John gives this church so that they can distinguish between false teachers and true teachers.
- Q I am following you. Let's keep going.
- A The first question that I want us to think about is, "Who is the 'we' referring to in chapter 1.1-10? Take a look at the first several verses:
- "This is what **we** proclaim to you: what was from the beginning, what **we** have heard, what **we** have seen with our eyes, what **we** have looked at and our hands have touched (concerning the word of life– 1:2 and the life was revealed, and **we** have seen and testify and announce to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us). 1:3 What **we** have seen and heard **we** announce to you too, so that you may have fellowship with us (and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ). 1:4 Thus **we** are writing these things so that our joy may be complete." [1John 1:1-4]
- So, who do you think the "we" is here?
- Q Well, it looks like the "we" are people who have seen and touched the Word of Life. I am assume that this "Word of Life" is John's way of referring to Jesus. So this would be people who have actually seen and touched Jesus. Clearly John is one of the "we" so maybe the "we" are those who were still alive who had seen, heard and been with Jesus when He was on earth.
- A That is a great answer and I think we are on the same page. John is writing to a community of Christians in Ephesus in 90's AD. He is probably the last living Apostle who actually heard and saw Jesus while he was on the earth. The community that he is writing to has never seen or heard Jesus personally. Remember the Apostles were the "witnesses of the Resurrection" who were entrusted with the revelation of the true Gospel.
- John, then represents the Apostles, those who were entrusted with true message of Jesus. So if the "we" are the true Apostles of Jesus here, who would the "you" be in these same verses?
- Q Well the "you" would clearly be the members of the church that John is writing to, right?
- A Yes. That is right. Now take a look at the use of these pronouns in 1:5-10:
- "Now this is the gospel message **we** have heard from him and announce to



you: God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. 1:6 If **we** say **we** have fellowship with him and yet keep on walking in the darkness, we are lying and not practicing the truth. 1:7 But if **we** walk in the light as he himself is in the light, **we** have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 1:8 If **we** say we do not bear the guilt of sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 1:9 But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness. 1:10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us.” [1John 1:5-10]

**So who does the “we” refer to in these verses?** Is there any reason to think that John changes the use of the pronouns for verses 5-10?

- Q Well, it would make sense that the “we” refers to John and the other Apostles. He continues to distinguish between “we” and “you” in these verse. I understand what you are saying, but what is the point?
- A Now that is the question. The point here is that John is giving a set of tests to distinguish false teachers or false prophets and true teachers who follow the example of the true Apostles. The true Apostles or teachers say that they have fellowship with Christ and they walk in the light thus practicing the truth. True Apostles and teachers walk in the light thus showing that they have true fellowship with one another being cleansed by the blood of Jesus. True Apostles and teachers speak openly about the fact that they still sin because Jesus is faithful to do what He has promised. *Does that make sense?*
- Q Yes that makes sense, but I am not sure that I understand how all of this fits together. It still sounds like life we confess our sins, Jesus will forgive us.
- A Jesus is and will be faithful always to forgive us, there is not doubt about that. However, lets do little more work and then see if we can really understand what John is saying here.

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### What is the meaning of fellowship?

- A Let’s talk about the Apostles just a minute more since understanding who they were and what they were doing is very important for this context. Take note of what John says in 1:3: “what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you, so that you too may have *fellowship* with us, for indeed, *our fellowship is with the Father and with His son Jesus Christ.*” Think about that and then see if you can tell me what it means.
- Q Well it seems that John is saying that he, and the other Apostles had seen and heard the Lord Jesus. Now they have passed on what He said to others, the church particu-

larly. John wants the church to hear this so that they may have fellowship with the Apostles because they have fellowship with the Father and the Son. It is almost like John is saying if the church has fellowship with him and the Apostles, they will also have fellowship with the Father and the Son. Is that close? Is that what he means?

**A** I think that is exactly what John is saying.

**Q** Well, is John then saying that the Apostles mediate between God and His people?

**A** In a certain sense, yes, I think he is. But it is not a mediation the way it has come up in some branches of Christianity. I think that what John is saying is that anyone who believes and trusts in their message—the Gospel of Jesus—has fellowship with them and God because this is the way the Father reveals the Son. So the Apostles had a personal relationship with Christ, received his Message and then proclaimed that message to others so that they too might have fellowship, share life with the Father and the Son. Does that make sense?

**Q** Okay, that makes sense. It is really about the Apostles who have proclaimed the one true Gospel, like Paul talks about in Galatians.

**A** Exactly.

**Q** Say a little more about the word “fellowship.” What does he mean by that?

**A** That is the next question that I wanted to deal with; you beat me to it. In 1 John the issue of fellowship is not small matter. In general the term “fellowship” carries the idea of sharing something in common. In the New Testament, when believers “fellowship” with one another this usually means that they are “sharing life together.” In the same sense, when we have fellowship with God, this generally means that we have been called to share in His life. So the idea of fellowship, when used of man’s relationship to God speaks about us sharing His life, sharing His way of life.

**Q** That is a lot more powerful idea than the way I have understood it. I hear people talk about “breaking fellowship with God” when they sin, or are disobedient. The way you are explaining it seems to make fellowship something much more serious.

**A** I don’t want to get us too far off track on this, but I do believe that having fellowship with God is very serious. I believe it speaks to our unbreakable, saving relationship with Him, purchased with Jesus’ blood and sustained by Jesus’ grace.

For John fellowship with God is established and maintained by the true proclamation of the Gospel – the message that was entrusted to the Apostles. This fellowship is a sharing in God’s life. Does that make sense.

**Q** Yes it does. But I have a question: When I sin, does that “break fellowship” with God?

**A** Let me simply say that the Bible never uses this language. I can’t find any reference

to “loosing” or “breaking fellowship” with God because. I think this is because the writers who use this term use it in a more serious way. Again, for them, fellowship is sharing in God’s life. To loose that would be like losing salvation.

A great test of this is 1 Corinthians. In that letter, Paul writes to one of the most immature and sinful communities around. But not once in the letter does he charge them with breaking fellowship or losing fellowship with God. In fact, he begins the letter by saying,

“... the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— 1:7 so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1:8 who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1:9 **God is faithful**, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. [1Corinthians 1:6-9 ESV]

Even though this church was immature and sinful, Paul was confident in one thing: **God would be faithful** to sustain them, blameless in the day of judgement, because He had called them into fellowship with the Lord Jesus. I think John is going to make the same argument in the passage we are looking at. The completion of our salvation is *responsibility of our Father*, not ours. He is the One who will be faithful even if we are faithless.

Q That is really powerful and I want this to be true, but I have never really thought about it that way before. That does seem to be exactly what Paul is saying. I am going to have to chew on that a little. But it worries me because it seems that you are saying our sinfulness is irrelevant, that it really doesn’t matter whether we sin or not because God is faithful.

A That is a great observation and something that we need to be absolutely clear about. Our sin does matter. We know that the Holy Spirit is “quenched” or “grieved” by sin, especially sin that causes disunity in the Body of Christ like Paul talks about in 1 Thessalonians 5:19 and Ephesians 4:30.

Also, we are now “new creatures” who have the ability to say “no” to the power of sin. We don’t take God’s grace for granted. We don’t take His mercy for granted. Sin is death and corruption; we can’t live in it anymore because we are now people of light.

We also do not focus on our sin; we focus on God the Father working faithfully in Christ through the power of the Spirit to do in us what we cannot do on our own. But that is getting right to the truth that underlies everything that we are talking about: God is the one who deals with our sin problem through the work of our Lord Jesus. We simply receive what He has done for us.

Q Okay, I see where you are coming from now. I can accept that. In fact, that is just awesome to realize how great God is and how much He has provided for us.

A Yes it is. Should we move on a little further.

Q Yeah, I am ready.

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## **The Light and the Darkness**

**A** The next thing I wanted you to take note of is in line with what we just discussed. What do you think John mean in verse 5 where he says, “God is light, and in Him there is no darkness.”

**Q** John is using “light” to refer to who God is since he says God IS light. It makes me think of God’s glory, His visible, radiant presence that was in the Tabernacle and the Temple in the Hebrew Scriptures.

**A** Wow, that is good. I have not really thought of it that way before. That is a better way of explaining it that I was thinking about. Keep going.

**Q** “Light” then might be a way of summarizing all God’s perfection - He is true, He is good, He is just, He is loving, He is gracious, and so on.

**A** I think that is right. For us, also, I think “walking in the light” implies living our lives out in the open, not trying to hide, not trying to cover ourselves up, not trying to hide our own sinfulness. We are honest and transparent about who we really are. Does that make sense?

**Q** Yeah, it does.

**A** So then what is the darkness?

**Q** Well, the darkness would then be all that is not part of who God is. This would be lying and treachery and hatred and evil and such.

**A** I think that is right on the mark to. So what is John saying about God?

**Q** That God is perfect and glorious and there is no corrupt or impure thing in Him.

**A** Exactly. And he reveals this clearly; he does not hide who is really is.

**Q** I see that.

**A** Something else here we need to take note of: John does not deal in “shades” of truth. John often uses analogies of absolute opposites like we have here: light vs. darkness. He will also speak about life vs. death and truth vs. lie. John does not speak in shades of “grey.” For him, it is simple: things are either the truth or they are the lie. We are either alive or we are dead. Does that make sense?

**Q** Yes it does. What is point then?

**A** Well let me ask you the question. Take a look at verse 6. What would it mean in if someone walks or is “in darkness”?

- Q I think John gives the answer right in the same verse. They are lying. They are not living according to the truth. They are not thinking or acting the way God Himself would act. They are not living out in the open for all to see.
- A Right. So in this context then, if someone says that they have fellowship with Jesus and yet keep on “walking in the darkness” —in lying and deceit—how should we “label” these people?
- Q OK, I think I am starting to see your point. These would be the false teachers, the false prophets that John is warning the people about.
- A Exactly. John is giving them the evidence they should look for to come to some conclusions on who is true and who is false. If that makes sense, we can move to the next issue.
- Q Yeah it makes sense, but let me ask one question. Does living in the Light mean that we are living in complete obedience and faith in God all the time?
- A I don’t think it can mean that fully in the context. I mean John clearly wants us to live in faith and truth and obedience, but the whole point in this context is that even we sin, even if we fail to do this, we have an advocate with the Father, the Lord Jesus (1 John 2:1). Does that make sense?
- Q Yeah it does.
- A Let’s move on to the next issue then.
- Q Let’s go.

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### “If...Then”—Conditional Sentences

- A In this whole passage we have five sets of conditional, “if...then” statements. Let’s take a look at that one more time and separate them out.
- 1:6 **If** we say we have fellowship with him  
and yet keep on walking in the darkness,  
[**then**] we are lying and not practicing the truth.
- 1:7 But **if** we walk in the light as he himself is in the light,  
[**then**] we have fellowship with one another  
and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.
- 1:8 **If** we say we do not bear the guilt of sin,  
[**then**] we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.
- 1:9 But **if** we confess our sins,  
[**then**] he is faithful and righteous,

forgiving us our sins and  
cleansing us from all unrighteousness.

1:10 **If** we say we have not sinned,  
[**then**] we make him a liar and his word is not in us.”

In English grammar when you hear an “If . . . then” statement, what do you think?

- Q Well that usually means some type of a cause and effect relationship: “If I hit you, then it will hurt.” Or something like that.
- A That is generally what we think. But take a look at these verse very carefully: are these really giving us a cause and effect? Look at verse 6. Does saying that we have fellowship with Jesus and continuing to walk in the darkness CAUSE us to lie and not practice the truth?
- Q That is a tricky question. I think it is really the other way around. Our saying one thing but acting in another way would be caused by us lying and not practicing the truth. Is that right?
- A That is the way I think about it to. But let’s keep going. Look at verse 7. Does our “walking in the light” CAUSE our fellowship and the cleansing of Jesus blood?
- Q That would make Salvation conditional, based on something we have to do, right? I don’t think that can be what John is saying. I mean if Jesus blood only cleanses those who are walking in the light - thinking and acting like God, we would all be in trouble. An if we are already walking in the light, then why would we even need the cleansing? Is that the point.
- A I would agree. You see the problem then. John uses the same construction throughout all these verses; the way we read one verse affects all the others. If we have to confess our sins to get forgiveness, then we have to walk in the light, live our lives the way God does, to receive cleansing. That is a big problem.
- Q Wow, this is really starting to get to the point. So why did John say these things this way?
- A A better question would be, why did the translators translate the passage this way? I say that because there are many different ways to use “if . . . then” statements both in English and in Greek, the language John is using.
- Check out this statement: “For **if** we believe that Jesus died and rose again, **then** God will also bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.” [1 Thesalonians 4:14] Think about that for a minute. Is this a cause and effect relationship? Is our believing that Jesus died and rose again the cause or the condition for the resurrection of those who have “fallen asleep in Christ”?

Q No, it can't be. God raising the dead in Christ is not conditioned on our belief in that truth; He will do that whether we believe it or not. Right?

A I would agree. So what is Paul saying in this passage?

Q Will I think he is saying that if we believe and are confident that God raised Jesus from the dead, then we can also be confident that He will raise those who are now dead in Christ. He is saying "if" we believe this, then it makes sense that we can also believe "that."

A I think that is exactly what he is saying. In this case Paul is setting up the grounds in the "if" part to come to the conclusion in the "then" part. Does that make sense?

Q Yes, I am getting it, but can you help me understand it a little better?

A Ok, check this out: "He said to him, **'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, then neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'**" [Luke 16:31 ESV].

Q OK, I am starting to see this clearly now. In this case, just because these people don't hear Moses and the Prophets doesn't cause them not to be convinced, even if someone is raised from the dead. The "if" gives evidence that backs up the claim that they would not be convinced even if someone were raised from the dead. Yes?

A You got it. What we are seeing is that there are many different types of conditional sentences in English and in Greek, for that matter.. It seems that in 1 John 1, the clauses follow a similar pattern rather than a cause>effect pattern. In this case, the "if" does not give the cause and the "then" the effect; instead the "if" gives the *grounds* and the "then" gives *conclusion*. Take a look at this chart:

"if ... then" : cause > effect

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"if ... then" : **grounds** > **CONCLUSION**  
 [*effect* > **CAUSE**]

In this type of sentence you can think of the cause>effect being reversed: effect>cause or better said, grounds>conclusion.

Q OK, I am tracking along, but help me to see this more clearly in the text.

A Well lets translate the verses in such a way that makes this relationship more explicit. Take a look at this:

6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in darkness,  
*it is because [ or it can be concluded that] we lie*  
 and do not practice the truth;

7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light,

*it is because [ or it can be concluded that] we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His son cleanses us from all sin.*

Does that help?

Q Yes it does, but it really changes the way I think about these statements.

A Exactly. Let's add one more verse:

8 If we say we do not bear the guilt of sin,  
*it is because [ or it can be concluded that] we are deceiving ourselves*  
and the truth is not in us.

Q Ok, let me try this on verse 9:

9 But **if** we confess our sins,  
*it is because [ or it can be concluded that] He is faithful and righteous,*  
forgiving us our sins and  
cleansing us from all unrighteousness.

A I think you are getting the hang of it.

Q Wow, I just noticed something that I have not seen before. I have always thought about this verse saying, "If we confess our sins, he will forgive us..." But what it says is really "If we confess, he is faithful and just..." This verse is really telling us something about Jesus - that HE is faithful and just. My confession cannot CAUSE Jesus to be faithful and just; that is who He is! I have never really seen that before. So I John is saying that true teachers can confess their sins because Jesus is faithful and just, with the result that he forgives and cleanses their sin? Is that the point.

A Yes I think it is. But hang on. Let's take a look at one more thing and then we will put it all together.

### What does the word "confess" mean?

A A critical question for this whole discussion is based around how John uses this word "confess" in his writings. Because of our tradition, most people just assume that John is talking about confessing our sins to God. I think he is speaking about something else, but let me prove it to you.

In the writings of John he uses this word "confess" 10 times (3x in the Gospel, 5x in 1 John, 1x in 2 John and 1x in Revelation). In each case the usage and meaning seems to be the same. Take a look at a couple of examples:

John 1.20 "Now [John the Baptist] **confessed** and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."



John 9.22 “His [the blind man healed by Jesus] parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone **confessed** Jesus to be Messiah, that person was to be put out of the Synagogue.”

John 12.42 “Nevertheless, at the same time many even among the leaders believed in Jesus. But because of the Pharisees they would not **confess** their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue.”

1 John 2.23 “No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever **confesses** the Son has the Father also.”

John 4.15 “If anyone **confesses** that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him, and he in God.”

Revelation 3.5 [Jesus speaking] “He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never erase his name from the book of life, but will **confess** his name before my Father and His angels.”

So analyze this for me. How is John using the word?

- Q Well in the Gospel the word seems to talk about “proclaiming” or “speaking in public” about something. John makes a public statement about not being the Christ. 9:22 refers to people confessing, speaking openly about believing in Jesus. In the letters it seems to be the same: it is speaking out about belief in Jesus. Revelation is interesting because it talks about Jesus “confessing” our name before the Father! This would have to be a “public” declaration too, I think.
- A Excellent. And notice: the word is never used in the context of a prayer or petition being made to God. In fact, the only person that “confesses” something directly to God is Christ Himself in Revelation 3.5!!! In all the cases, the word is used for some public declaration to other humans.
- Q So this “confessing” is not necessarily something we do to God, but openly to one another?
- A Yes, I think that is exactly the point. Remember who the “we” is in this context: the true Apostles who represent Christ and His true Message. A true teacher will speak openly, they will not try to hide their own sins. They do this because they are completely convinced that Jesus is faithful and just, that He has and will forgive and cleanse them completely. As they do this they serve as an example to the rest of Christ’s people: this is who we are. We are people who live in the light, we don’t try to hide, even in our sinfulness. We can do this because our hope and faith are in the One who is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse us. Does that make sense.
- Q Yes. But it is freeing and scary at the same time.

A What do you mean?

Q Well it sounds like you are saying that we should speak openly about our sins and that terrifies me. I don't know that I want to do that.

A It is a scary thing. But I think it is scary to us because we have not experienced living in community that is totally captivated by Christ's grace and love. Maybe we don't really know how to deal with one another. Maybe this is scary because we have not learned how to let Jesus really take all of our burdens, even our shame. What do you think?

Q Yeah, I agree.

A Take a look at another passage that deals with this:

So confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great effectiveness.  
[James 5:16 NET]

James admonishes us to confess our sins to *one another* so that we can pray for one another and be healed. This is what Jesus desires for us. Not just to have the guilt and debt of our sins removed, which is forgiveness, but for us to be healed, completely cleanse of our *sinfulness*. As we speak openly to one another and share with one another, we can pray for one another and seek healing.

Q So you are not saying that we should get up in the middle of church every Sunday and confess!?

A Absolutely not. I believe we just need some trusted brothers or sisters in Christ in whom we can confide. And we don't have to get into all the gory details of our sins. We share the same problems and the same sins. This takes wisdom.

We learn to do this by the true teachers among us who show us how to do this by speaking openly about their own sins and sinfulness. They give us the example and that is what John is saying here. True teachers, who follow the Apostolic example and message speak openly about their sins because of their confidence in Jesus' faithfulness. They live in the light, not trying to hide anything.

Q OK, I see your point. We have really covered a lot of ground. Can we bring it all together and summarize it all so I can be sure I understand.

A Absolutely.

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## Bringing it All Together

A I'll tell you what; let me give you a translation of these verses that will bring together all we have talked about so far:

“This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet live our lives in the darkness, it is evident that we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we live our lives in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, it is because we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, it is evident that we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we publicly acknowledge our sins, it is because He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, then it is evident that we are making Him a liar and His word is not in us.” [1 John 1:5-10]

Q That really brings a whole new perspective to this passage. So, let me make sure I am clear: we don't receive forgiveness based on confession our our sins. We are able to speak openly about our sin because of who Jesus is and what He is doing and will do for us.

A Yes. I am confident that this is the right way to think about things. And let me just add one more thing. I believe that “walking in the light” means that we live our lives completely in the open—we don't try to hide from others or from God. As we “pray without ceasing,” like Paul admonishes us, we should want to be open and honest with our Father about our own failings and sins. When we sin, the Father calls us to be satisfied with what Christ has done for us to free us from both the guilt and the tyranny of sin. And we should not “cover over our sins” but speak to our Father about them.

However, we don't stop there. After we give praise to God for His work in and through us, we should then ask him to provide opportunities for us to grow to maturity by replacing the sin with service, “presenting our members to Him as weapons of righteousness” like Paul talks about in Romans 6-8. This is more in line with *repentance*. God is not just interested in our “confession,” He is also interested in our “putting off the old person”—formed by the Old Way of Life, so that we can “put on the new person”—who is being shaped according to Christ's image, His truth, goodness and glory.

As I pray and talk with the Lord, I talk about my sins and sinfulness with Him and give thanks for what He *has already done* in the hope of what He *will do*—not just forgive, but also cleanse and heal. And I ask Him to do that very thing. I ask Him to transform me so that I want these things for myself as well. Does that all make sense?

Q Yes it does. It is freeing actually.

A I hoped it would be.



