



SESSION 7: Living by the Spirit

“So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” Galatians 5:16.

This means a life that is guided by the Holy Spirit rather than by one's own desires or sinful nature. It's about being led and empowered by the Holy Spirit in daily life, reflecting God's will through your actions, thoughts, and decisions.

What does ‘the flesh’ mean in Galatians 5:16? It refers to the sinful nature, or that part of us that is prone to selfishness, sin, and rebellion against God. Living by the Spirit involves surrendering to the Holy Spirit's influence, which helps us to live in alignment with God's commands and to feel his love. The concept of ‘living by the Spirit’ also connects to spiritual growth and maturity. When we're living by the Spirit, we begin to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit that we have already been speaking about and see in Galatians 5:22-23, things like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and self-control. These qualities become more evident in our lives as we continually rely on the Holy Spirit's guidance.

Make a daily choice. *‘Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God - truly righteous and holy.’* Ephesians 4:21.

The renewing of our minds. Paul says that we can be ‘transformed by the renewing of our mind’ (Romans 12:2). Romans 8:1 also deals with the ‘shame’ pandemic. *‘Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.’* There's a huge problem today with the issue of shame. It's a big thing among young people currently and is a significant concern. Several factors contribute to the prominence of shame in modern youth, especially in the context of social media, mental health, and societal pressures. The message of ‘no condemnation’ and of acceptance of us by God in Christ, however, because of the work of Jesus on the cross, is a powerful one. And Paul says that it's the Spirit who gives us this life free from the condemnation of God and our shame.

The spirit of holiness. The Holy Spirit points us to the cross where Jesus died to cleanse us and make us holy. He can give us the power to live holy lives, separated for the service of God.

The spirit sets us free from fear. *‘The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.* Romans 8:15-16. Paul also taught about the problem of fear in his second letter to young Timothy. *‘For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline’.* (2 Timothy 1:7 New Living Translation).

The spirit gives us power to witness for Christ. *‘you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’*, Acts 1:8. The original New Testament word for ‘witnesses’ is the same as we use for martyrdom, or suffering for our faith, and it reminds us that there is a price to be paid for reaching out to others with the good news of the gospel. When the Holy Spirit fills us, he equips us with boldness, wisdom, and power to face that pressure and still to step out in God’s name. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of mission!

The spirit helps us in our prayer lives. *‘In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God’*, Romans 8:26-27. This is where the anointing of the Spirit can really propel our praying forward, perhaps by praying in tongues, or singing in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:15).

Power for living!

The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is God’s wonderful gift to us, purchased by Christ at Calvary, distributed by him to all those who ask him, and an indispensable aid to our discipleship, ministry, witness and prayer life. In the words of Paul in Ephesians 5:18, *‘Be continuously filled with the Spirit’*.

As you read these words now perhaps you have really asked for the baptism in the Holy Spirit and feel that you have not yet received. Remember the words of Jesus again – *‘ask and keep on asking; knock and keep on knocking; seek and keep on seeking’*. Take every opportunity through your small group or church to receive prayer to be filled with the Spirit and maybe share with a trusted friend you know who is living by the Spirit in their daily life, asking them to pray for you and with you.

Why not just close your eyes and maybe lift your hands and open them up to receive? Open hands and arms can sometimes be a symbol of our openness to receive a gift. If, after you have prayed these simple words, you sense God’s Spirit moving in your heart and life, just begin to praise him with your voice, speaking whatever sounds or words come immediately to you.

Prayer

'Heavenly Father, I thank you so much for the gift of your Holy Spirit's power. I am hungry and thirsty for that gift right now, and pray, Lord, that according to your Word, you will fill me now with your Holy Spirit. I receive the same Holy Spirit that you gave to your disciples. In the name of Jesus. Holy Spirit, come! Amen!'

For discussion, further study or reflection

- Share with those around you any questions you may have about 'living by the Spirit'.
- Have you received any new anointing of the Spirit since you began this course? Share that with someone else today.
- Read Acts 1:5 again and claim the promise for yourself.
- Read Acts 2:1-4 and thank God for the wonderful gift of his Holy Spirit.