

ONLINE 4

LINING UP OUR LIVES TO GOD: WALK THIS WAY

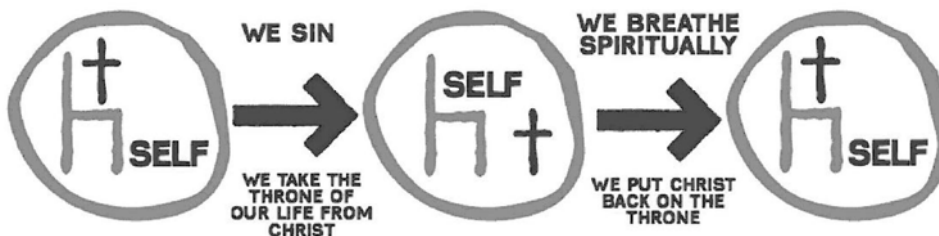


Since the last study, have you asked the Holy Spirit to fill you? How's it going?
What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?

The Spirit-filled life is not a one-off event but a way of life. Christ wants to live his life through our life moment by moment. Ephesians 5v18 can be translated literally as "go on continually being filled with the Spirit". To do this we need to keep Christ on the throne of our lives by surrendering ourselves to him, obeying him and trusting him to empower our obedience moment by moment. A simple analogy with breathing helps us see how we can live in God's power as a way of life:

EXHALE - We breathe out by dealing with our sin as soon as we become aware of it.

INHALE - We breathe in the Holy Spirit by surrendering our life to Christ, trusting the Spirit to fill us with his presence and power. This can be shown as follows:



To be a disciple of Jesus means to follow him and to learn from him how to live our every day life as he would if he were us. This isn't easy, because the Bible pictures the Earth as a war zone and we face opposition. We must learn to apply our faith to our daily circumstances and relationships.

What's been your experience of trying to live the Christian life?
What struggles have you faced?

The Bible describes three main enemies to living the Christian life:
our old nature (the flesh or sinful nature), the world (the culture and people around us), and the devil.

What do we learn about our opponents from the following?



THE FLESH

ROMANS 7v15-18

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

THE WORLD

I JOHN 12v15-17

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he does – comes not from the father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away but the man who does the will of God lives for ever.

THE DEVIL

JOHN 8v44

[The devil] was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

ZECHARIAH 3 v 1

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him.

We can overcome the opposition by keeping our friendship with Jesus close. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit and follow his leading.

To be tempted is not a sin (MATTHEW 4v1, JAMES 1v13-15, I CORINTHIANS 10v13). Temptation becomes sin when we entertain it or act on it. God promises a way out from temptation. Paul describes a life lived in the power of the Holy Spirit in GALATIANS 5:

GALATIANS 5 v 16-25

16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. 17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. 19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who do live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

v 16-18

What does it mean to live by the Spirit?

What is the assurance in v16?

Can you relate to the tension Paul describes in v17?

What does it mean to be led by the Spirit?

When Paul talks about being under the law he means trying to keep the rules.

Why does Paul contrast being led by the Spirit with being under the law?

v 19-21

Why does Paul describe these things as “acts of sinful nature”?

What is the “kingdom of God”?

What is Paul’s warning and what does it mean?

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

v 22-25

Paul contrasts the “acts” of the sinful nature with the “fruit” of the Spirit. What is the significance of the difference between the “acts” of the sinful nature and the “fruit” of the Spirit?

Why are “acts” plural and “fruit” singular?

When Paul says we’ve “crucified the sinful nature” he means we extinguish or subdue those passions and desires. How can we do this?

What does it mean to “keep in step” with the Spirit?

To live in the power of the Spirit we need to continually receive his love, wisdom, power, forgiveness and grace. We grow in these things as we spend time with him, praying, worshipping, reading and reflecting on the Bible. As we develop our friendship with God we learn to listen to him for his leading in our life and witness.

The Spirit’s transformation of our life is a process. Because God’s not finished with us, we’ll continue to make mistakes and sin. As we grow up in our faith the critical question is not whether we make mistakes, but how we respond to them. We grow to maturity over time by walking moment by moment with Jesus and in fellowship with others who are walking with him. The Christian lives by faith. We enjoy God’s forgiveness, power, peace and love as we trust his promises. We continue to follow him when it’s hard because we believe he brings the fullest life possible and he’s taking us somewhere worth going.

How would you summarise what we’ve learned about walking in the Spirit?