

Spirit Directed Life

The Challenges We Face Today

One of the greatest challenges facing disciples of Jesus is learning how to receive moment by moment direction from the Holy Spirit.

- We want to do God's will all the time, but we seem to get distracted by the cares, concerns and pleasures of this life.
- Often we feel we are out of sync with what the Spirit desires and are living more by what we desire.
- We are not sure what the spirit desires and have not developed the necessary disciplines to stay in step with the Spirit.
- We are not sure what it really means to live by the spirit, walk in the spirit and stay in step with the Spirit as the Bible commands.

Lesson Truth

The Holy Spirit is the key to a holy and godly life. We must train ourselves to live by the Spirit and not by our own desires and plans. We must intend to live by what the Spirit desires. This requires that we know moment by moment how the Spirit desires us to live.

Lesson Goal

The goal for this lesson is for you to begin to develop the discipline of discerning moment by moment the Spirit's desire and living according to His desire and not our own.

Lesson Discussion



Romans 8:5 ESV "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit."

Galatians 5:16-17 ESV "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do."

Galatians 5:25 ESV "If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit."

Galatians 6:8 ESV "For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."

What the Spirit is after in our lives is that our wills are aligned with what the Spirit desires and that we carry out the desires of the Spirit, not the desires of our sinful, worldly natures. We have the possibility of living by the Spirit because when we were born again we received another nature, the divine nature of God, which gives us power to live according to what the Spirit desires.

The challenge we face is how to live out the desires of the Holy Spirit day by day and moment by moment. Today there is not much teaching on this because there a very few who are really living this way, yet it is crucial if we are to live Christian. So we must learn how to live by the Spirit, to stay in step with the Spirit, and walk consistently in the Spirit.

How do we live moment by moment according to what the Spirit desires? First we must intend to live like this. It must become a way of life going forward, not just wishful thinking or an occasional effort.

Living to please the Spirit requires a disciplined approach to thinking and living differently so that by habit we are living by the Spirit, not by the worldly, sinful nature.

Required Steps

The steps we must take to develop the habit of living by the Spirit, moment by moment, are pretty simple. However, developing a disciplined habit of doing that is a difficult challenge, but is entirely possible. Unless it becomes a high priority in your life, you will find yourself often outside of God's will and living contrary to the Spirit's desire.

There are three simple steps to develop the habit of learning to live by the Spirit. These steps will help you live your life according to what the Spirit desires. At every point in your life, in every event, and with every decision, the Spirit desires a definite action and attitude from you that will honor God and be pleasing to Him.

The steps are simple: (1) ask the Spirit, (2) then do what the Spirit shows you, (3) then just trust God for the outcome.

Let's take a closer look at those three simple steps and see how they are actually lived out. There are significant spiritual barriers that will work to prevent us from carrying out these simple steps, but they are barriers that can be overcome. The life of the Spirit in you has the power to bust through these barriers if you let the Spirit have His way.

Common barriers include forgetting to ask the Spirit, ignoring the Spirit because we are so busy, do what the Spirit asks our way instead of His, impatience, self-gratification, negative emotions, fear, worry, doubt, and stress to name a few.

Step 1: Ask the Spirit

First, you must stop what you are doing and clear your mind of everything in your thinking, bringing your mind to focus on the Spirit.

Often we are so busy and so involved with worldly things that we get out of tune with the Spirit and we don't even think about stopping to

engage Him. We must develop the habit of regularly stopping, clearing the mind and engaging the Spirit. So start developing a habit of regularly stopping what you are doing and consciously acknowledging the Spirit.

Most Christians have lost the ability to control their thinking. We let our mind wander wherever it wants and we have been doing this so long that it is an entrenched habit that will take persistent effort to reverse. You must force your mind away from whatever you are thinking about and tune in to the Spirit. So start developing a habit of taking control of your thinking and redirect it to the Spirit.

Focusing on the Spirit is not something that comes easily to most. Satan will throw everything he can at you to keep your mind on anything and everything except the Spirit. You must bring your mind to focus on the Spirit before you begin to communicate with Him. Early on it may take several minutes or more to do this, but over time it will become easier.

Once your mind is clear and focused on the Spirit, simply ask Him to show you what He would have you to know about what you should be doing or thinking about next.

Whatever the Spirit shows you will be an action or attitude that will honor God. If it is not God honoring, it is not from the Spirit. Satan does

not want you to honor God. He wants you to honor himself. He gets you to honor himself when you do or think about anything that dishonors God.

Whatever the Spirit brings to your mind, don't try to negotiate or change in any way what He is showing you. Whatever He shows you, that is what He expects you to do.

Step 2: Obey the Spirit

It does not matter if what the Spirit shows you is something you don't like, or don't agree with, or don't want to do, you must immediately step out in obedience and do it.

The Christian life is primarily about obedience. It is only through obedience that we can demonstrate our love for God and His Son. If you pick and choose what you want to obey or try to negotiate the thing towards what you want to do, you will dishonor God and give glory to Satan. You will grieve the Spirit and will experience consequences for your disobedience.

Anytime you disobey the Spirit you must repent, confess your sin, and step out to obey what the Spirit showed you. Jesus is always willing to forgive us if we will sincerely repent and confess our sin of disobedience.

The second part of obedience is to do what the Spirit directed you His way and not your way. There are different ways to do things. If you are not sure how to carry out what the Spirit has shown you, go back to the Spirit and ask for guidance on how to do what He has shown you. We cannot do what the Spirit desires by doing it our own way or someone else's way instead of the Spirit's way.

Regardless of what the Spirit is showing you to do, whether you like it or not or agree with it or not, just do it anyway. Just do it.

Step 3: Trust God with the Outcome

There may be consequences or negative outcomes as a result of obeying the Spirit. That is ok. The ways of God are not the ways of men and men will often resist or fight against God's way. It does not matter what men think or do in reaction to your obedience to the Spirit. At

that point it is not your problem – it is God's. So just trust God and don't feel like you need to justify your actions nor should you feel guilty for obeying the Spirit.

The resistance or fight may come from family, friends, other Christians, people at work, or whoever. Whoever it comes from or wherever it occurs, the next right step will always be to honor God in your response and then just trust the outcome to God, whatever it is, good or bad. We do not determine outcomes, God does. So let God be God and just do the next right thing He shows you through the Spirit.

Don't let worry, doubt, fear, or stress dominate your thinking after you have obeyed what the Spirit shows you. Satan will try to get you to doubt that you really obeyed the Spirit so that you will begin to doubt if you truly did what the Spirit showed you.

The Spirit Himself will show you if you did not obey. He is the only one you can trust and He will let you know through your conscience if you were disobedient. If we have failed the Spirit in some way through disobedience, we can receive forgiveness as we confess and repent of our sins.

Holy Spirit Guidance

The concepts stated above are simple to understand but can be very challenging to live out. Let's see how we might begin to live this out moment by moment. There are many things we do each day. We have many tasks to do, we think many thoughts, we interact with others, we have varying attitudes throughout our day and we experience all kinds of unexpected events and situations.

There is a right way and a wrong way to behave and think in every event and situation we may find ourselves. When we live according to God's truth, we are living the right way. When we are living in unbelief and according to Satan's

lies, we are living the wrong way, no matter how well intentioned we are or how right it may seem from the perspective of the world.

The Spirit desires us to act and think in the way that honors God, not Satan. Satan's desire is that we act and think in a way that honors him and dishonors God. Every moment we are either choosing according to God's truth or Satan's lies. We can choose to disobey God's standard, and thereby sin, or we can choose to obey God's standard and demonstrate righteousness. It always comes down to a simple choice – choosing one or the other

Common Daily Activities

There are certain activities that we do day in and day out and are common to every Christian. You should not have to be directed to do these things and you don't have to ask the Holy Spirit if you should them.

- Go to the bathroom.
- Cleaning our bodies.
- Prayer time with God
- Reading the Bible daily
- Sleep
- Eating meals

These activities are a normal part of living as a Christian, but we can still dishonor God by the way we carry out these activities. We must do them with wisdom, understanding, and discipline. If we abuse ourselves by not doing these or doing them in an unwise manner, we are dishonoring God because it will impact our lives negatively at some point. God gives us wisdom freely if we will ask and there is a lot of wisdom available today for living physically and spiritually healthy lives.

There are other activities that we will do each day that are already planned. These may be simple chores such as doing dishes or mowing the lawn. They may be appointments that we have made with others or other responsibilities we have each day. These are usually activities that we have decided to do that we knew about before the day begins. This does not

necessarily mean we have to do them, but if nothing else more important comes up and the Spirit does not direct us in some other way, we will normally carry them out.

Other activities include all the things that pop up in the day that we might have to do something about. These are events, situations, or circumstances that we did not remember or know about before the day started. Every day will have its share of these kinds of activities.

This does not necessarily mean we always have to drop everything and do something about them, but they are potential activities that we may choose to do something about.

All the above activities will require us to choose whether or not we will engage that activity. Some activities may be more important than others and often we may shift things around to do what is prudent in managing our life and doing what the Spirit desires.

As we learn to let the Spirit manage our day, we will find that our lives will be in sync with the Spirit and our lives will be pleasing to God because we are doing the right things, the right way, from God's perspective.

Some activities that we planned or that pop up, we may choose to do nothing about at the moment or do nothing about at all. This is a big problem for most people because human beings tend to want to try and do everything and they feel guilty if they do not. This is a significant area of unbelief in the lives of many Christians and it is not from God, but from Satan. God does not intend for you to do everything that comes up, but just that which He shows you through the Spirit.

That is a lie that Christians believe, most often unconsciously, that results in a life out of order with what the Spirit desires. We must learn to do only what the Spirit desires. Again, the goal is to get to the point where less and less we have to consciously ask the Spirit – our lives become the will of God unconsciously. It takes time and applied discipline to get there and stay there.

But it is possible and it is the way the Spirit desires us to live.

Dealing with the Gaps

Typically we do not have our day scheduled out for every minute from the time we wake up till the time we go to bed. We have gaps, or times where we did not have anything planned and at that moment we have to choose what we are going to do. Making those choices is pretty easy during the working hours because most of us have plenty of other work related things we can do. However, it is a bit more difficult outside working hours – evenings and weekends for most of us.

What we do with these gaps is usually where we get into problems. If we have nothing planned, the tendency is to do whatever we want. We can either do things that bring value to God or we can do things to entertain or bring pleasure or gratification to ourselves or others. It is in these gaps that we most often choose the latter.

After a long day at work, we feel we have earned the right to do whatever we want if there is nothing else planned. We may watch TV, play video games, be involved in some kind of

recreational activity, catch up on work, spend time with family, go walk the mall, catch a movie, go exercise or party or do whatever else people enjoy doing. We also will tend to eat or drink more so for self gratification than what our bodies really need during these times.

Are any of these activities that we engage in during the gaps wrong? From the world's perspective they are probably all fine. But from the Spirit's perspective and that of a disciple of Jesus Christ, we may have to look at things a bit differently than the world does. They may actually be distracters from the faith rather than things that please God. This does not necessarily mean these things are wrong in general, but they may be wrong for you.

As followers of Jesus Christ, our lives are no longer our own. We have been bought with a

price and we no longer have any right to ourselves to do what we want to do. We must become slaves of righteousness and all our living must be directed toward living out the righteousness that we have received through the Son of God living in us. This concept is foreign to most of organized Christianity today. Even though they may acknowledge it, there is very little evidence of it being lived out.

The bottom line is this: whatever you are doing, is it what the Spirit desires for you personally? Not for others, but for you? As you continue the disciple journey with our Lord, over time you will find that the Spirit will desire more and more from you, a deeper and more satisfying relationship with Him that will result in more peace, more joy, and more meaning and purpose in your life.

A natural desire will unfold in your life that desires what the Spirit desires all the time. As that increases in your life you will find it easier to want to give up things that are not wrong in themselves, but stand in the way of what the Spirit desires for your life.

As we willingly give things up, we give them up freely and happily. We can only do that as we are allowing the Spirit to have His way in our life. We will find more freedom and more peace during the storms of life. Our lives will become of greater value to God and to others as our focus changes from what we want to what the Spirit desires. This is how God will change souls through us and bring to us those He is calling so we can carry out His command to make disciples.

Living by the Spirit

Let's look at a typical day for someone who is living moment by moment to what the Spirit desires.

We start our day with prayer and reading God's Word to prepare our mind and hearts to live by the Spirit that day.

We take some time to review our scheduled events, commitments, and priorities for that day and resolve any conflicts with the Spirit's direction if needed.

We resolve not to become a prisoner to our schedule and we stop often to ensure we are in tune with what the Spirit desires. Anytime we experience a loss of peace and we are experiencing fear, worry, doubt, or stress in our life, we are out of order with the Spirit. Stop immediately and query the Spirit to see what is out of order.

As other unexpected events and circumstances unfold, we stop and deal with them and choose a course of action. We will do something about it, delay any action for the time being, or determine we will take no action. If in doubt, seek the Spirit's direction.

As gaps appear, times in the day when we really don't have anything planned, especially our non-work time, we must force ourselves to stop and listen to what the Spirit would have us do and put our own needs and desires aside.

This does not mean we never have recreational time or hobbies, but we must first ensure the Spirit doesn't have something else for us to do. Gradually we will find ourselves giving up more and more self-gratification to engage in what the Spirit desires for us.

When important events or decisions come up, we stop immediately, clear our minds, ask the Spirit what He wants us to know and what He desires, then do whatever He shows us, leaving the outcome to Him, however it may end up.

Jesus' command to us is to go make disciples, teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded. The Spirit will move us more and more into this life as we leave our old life behind by giving up the right to ourselves to

Him more readily. We will find that more and more of our gap time will be filled with living according to what the Spirit desires.



One Step for Living This Truth

The foundation of the *One Step* series that you have been reading is to be able to live God's truth, one truth at a time, one step at a time. The goal for this particular lesson is to learn how to live in obedience to the Spirit moment by moment as He shows you what He desires.

ACTION STEP

Read this lesson as often as needed to remind you to live by the Spirit moment by moment.

Continue to follow the three steps and develop them as a consistent habit. Keep in mind that the goal is to walk in the Spirit, live by the Spirit and to consistently do what the Spirit desires, not what you desire.

Keep in mind that you must be patient with the process of living by the Spirit moment by moment and don't lay too great an expectation upon yourself.

Remember to continue to let self go and the things of this world in favor of living by the Spirit. Keep disciplining yourself to keep your mind on things above, not on things of the earth.

Lastly, deal with any disobedience the Spirit shows you immediately. The Spirit will work through your conscience to keep your life holy and godly.

Continue to read a chapter in the Gospels and the Letters each day. Write down thoughts or Scriptures that relate to living by the Spirit.

As you continue to practice living this truth, you may need to come back to this lesson often. Don't be in a rush to start the next lesson.

Even if it takes several weeks to get this truth integrated into your life, keep it as your primary focus until you feel you are living it.

Remember, the most common problem with Christians today is that they know many truths about the Christian life, but are not able to live them. Make sure you are solidly living this truth before attempting to tackle the next truth.