

Introduction

Last week we looked at the *identity* and *ministries* (various ways he works in the b-eliever's life) of the Holy Spirit. Yet, in spite of him indwelling us, his love for us, and his ability to empower our sanctification and ministry, many Christians continue to experience an absence of his power working in their lives. If he is all-loving and powerful, why don't we always see constant improvement in our condition? The New Testament also makes it clear that we have a choice and role to play in whether or not we allow the Holy Spirit to do what he so deeply desires.

Walking by the Spirit

Review Rom. 7:6, which describes two ways we can serve God/pursue sanctification.

"In the oldness of the letter" (7:7-25)

We can try to follow God by our own power. This leads to failure and defeat, as we saw two weeks ago (REVIEW TUTORIAL USE OF LAW).

Trying to serve God in this way is the "direct approach"--simply looking to the Law and trying to keep it.

Illustration:: X-Ray shows effects, but you can't rub on it to get it to heal. The X-Ray has served it's purpose--to reveal the problem. In the same way, the Law exposes our inability to serve God, but it provides no power to helps us.

We'd like to make the jump from Rom 6 to Romans 8 without stopping at Rom 7.

"In the newness of the Spirit"

This involves following God by the power of his Spirit.

Serving God in this way is the "indirect approach"--looking to God to enable us to fulfill the Law.

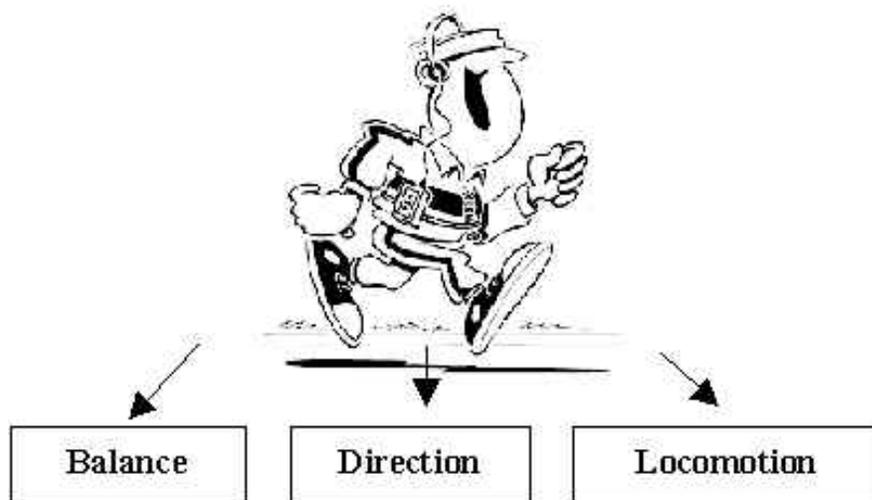
This second way is what Paul goes on to explain in Rom. 8:2-14 and Gal. 5:16-25. These are parallel passages which cover this subject of how to walk -- though with different emphases. Let's consider some similarities and differences in these passages:

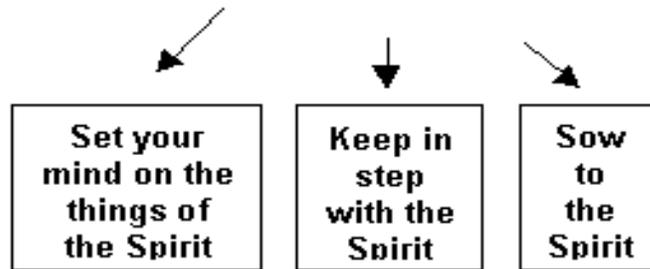
Refer to chart comparing Romans 8:1-14 and Galatians 5:16-25

Gal. 5:17,18 alludes to the failure we experience if we try to follow God "under the Law." Paul explains this in much more detail in Rom. 7:7-25.

Rom. 8:6 describes the results of walking according to the flesh as "death" and walking according to the Spirit very briefly as "life and peace." Paul explains this in much more detail in Gal. 5:19-23.

By studying both passages together we get a more complete picture of how to walk according to the Spirit. Just as physical walking involves three elements (balance, direction, locomotion), walking by the Spirit also involves three elements:





Christian authors usually focus on one of the elements involved in walking by the Spirit. Nee focuses on dependence, Stanford on mental focus on Position, Murray on obedience, etc. The key here is *balance*.

1) Set your mind on the things of the Spirit.

What does it mean to "walk by the Spirit"?

Many think this is primarily a subjective experience--trying to intuitively sense God's presence and guidance. Now, there *is* a subjective dimension involved in walking by the Spirit, and we will discuss this next week. But this is not what Paul focuses on here.

Others think this is primarily about behavioral change. Now, walking according to the Spirit *will* produce behavioral change. But if we equate walking by the Spirit with behavioral change, we're back to serving God under the law.

(Rom. 8:5-7) For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. (6) For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, (7) because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so . . .

According to Paul, the primary element in walking according to the Spirit is "setting our minds on the things of the Spirit."

Definition: Volitional reflection on the truths *concerning what God has freely given us* through Christ.

As we learn to set our mind on what God wants it set on, the power of the Holy Spirit is unleashed to gradually transform our characters and behavior ("the requirement of the law fulfilled . . . life") and also grant us increasing experience of God's peace.

God wants us to introspect regarding what we think about and the perspective from which we view the different facets of our life (remember Martyn Lloyd Jones' quote from week 3 about talking to ourselves versus listening to ourselves). Spiritual growth begins not with our behavior (what we do) or with our experiences (what we feel)--but with our minds (how we think). That's why he says in Romans 12:2 on this subject of transformation: (read)--behavioral and experiential transformation flow from mental renewal!!

What are the "things of the Spirit" that we should be setting our minds on?

Some Christian preachers say the "things of the Spirit" refer to messages given to us through heavenly voices or visions or dreams. This is not what Paul means. He wants us to focus on truths that have been revealed through the apostles and recorded in their writings, specifically on grace.

In other words, the "things of the Spirit" refer primarily to the New Testament teaching on God's grace. That's why Paul calls this serving God "under grace" (6:14).

"Setting your mind on the things of the Spirit" is choosing to look at every major area of your life in the light of God's grace. The more we learn about what Christ has given us, and the more we consciously view every area of our lives from his perspective, the more God's Spirit will transform our lives. (See also Col. 3:1-3).

(1 Cor. 2:12-13) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, (13) which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. (14) But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

(Col. 3:1-3) If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. (2) Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. (3) For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

(Eph. 4:20-25) 20 But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus,

22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. 25 Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH, EACH ONE of you, WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another.

Paul contrasts this mind-set to a mind-set on the "things of the flesh." This refers to the perspective we adopt on things apart from and contradictory to God's revealed grace. This is our mental "default setting"--which is why we must choose to "set our minds on" God's perspective. Note: This is why we emphasize biblical content (and especially what it teaches about God's grace) so much: going to Bible studies, taking courses, discussing scripture with one another, evaluating your thought-life and the messages coming at you from the world in light of what God says (2 Cor. 10:3-5). And this is why we emphasize New Testament more than Old Testament--because it teaches God's grace more clearly and fully.

Key mind-set areas

Let's get practical. Let's think about some of the major areas of our spiritual lives, and contrast what it looks like to think about them "according to flesh" versus "according to the Spirit":

1. Your Relationship With God

How you view God, and how you think God views you, are the most foundational and important spiritual things we can think about.

According to the flesh: We naturally assume that God's acceptance and approval of me is contingent to my performance. We tend to view God primarily as a strict parent/principal/supervisor--ready to pounce on every mistake we make. This is why we will tend to avoid God--especially when we think our performance has been poor - or (worse) become dishonest with ourselves and God.

According to the Spirit: But what does God say? Read Rom. 8:1--God will never condemn me (KJV error). Read 8:15-17--God does not want me to relate to him as a slave in fear of his rejection, but as a son and heir who is confident of his love. Read 8:38,39--nothing (including my own sins) can separate me from God's love.

To the extent that we set our minds on this great truth, we will tend to relate to God more frequently and more honestly. And thanksgiving will become a big part of our communication with God. In fact, the New Testament indicates that this is a key feature of the Spirit-empowered life (Eph. 5:18,20).

(Rom. 8:1) There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

(Rom. 8:15-17) For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" (16) The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, (17) and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ...

(Rom. 8:38,39) For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, (39) nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. Your Difficult Circumstances

It is inevitable and proper that we think about our circumstances--where we work, our state of health, our finances, etc. And because we live in a fallen world, sometimes these things are quite painful and negative.

According to the flesh: If we have a legalistic relationship with God, we will tend to interpret bad circumstances as God's punishment. If we view our happiness and security as contingent upon our circumstances, we will tend to spend an inordinate amount of time and energy worrying about them, or trying to change things we can't change, or blaming our unhappiness on them.

According to the Spirit: We will feel the impact of negative circumstances, and we will often try to improve them when possible. But, more fundamentally, we will remember two crucial biblical truths:

Read 8:18,23-25.

1. My negative circumstances are only temporary, to be removed in the next life and replaced by glory. When we view our negative circumstances in this light, God grants us resilience and hope.

(Rom. 8:18) For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Read 8:28,29.

2. God is sovereignly involved even through my negative circumstances for his glory and my growth. In other words, nothing can prevent God from accomplishing the most important goal in my life. This frees us from victimhood to thankful, creative cooperation. Our prayers will change from "Get me out of this!" to "What do you want me to learn from this?"

(Rom. 8:28) And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

3. Your Close Relationships

Most of us think a lot about the other people in our lives--especially close dating relationships, spouses, children, parents, friends, work associates, etc.

According to the flesh: Left to our own perspective, we will tend to believe that we will be happy when they love us the way we want to be loved. In other words, we look to these people to give us security, meaning, and identity. But this will always disappoint us sooner or later, because they are finite and fallen--only God can provide these things.

So we will become disappointed, outraged, try to manipulate, reject them, etc. After years of this, many get cynical about relationships and just use people where possible and avoid them otherwise.

According to the Spirit: As we draw our lives from God and his love for us, we discover a reliable and inexhaustible source of security, meaning, and identity. On this basis, we can approach relationships with others in a very different way.

We are able to enjoy people and bear their burdens instead of measuring ourselves by comparison to other people (Gal. 6:1-4). We are grateful to receive love from them -- but we don't have to demand it because we know God will be there. In fact, we see their love ultimately as an expression of God's love for us.

When they hurt us, we can extend forgiveness--because we're so aware and appreciative of how much God has forgiven us.

More importantly, we begin to be able to give love to others

sacrificially and without strings--because we are secure in God's love, and because we experience the joy of God when we do so. This other-centered perspective is both a result of spiritual growth and a cause of further growth.

(Gal. 5:26-6:4) Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. (6:1) Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted. (2) Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ. (3) For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. (4) But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another.

We need to have realistic expectations in this area. When we become Christians, we have already built many, deep mental groves. It takes time to build some new mental groves, deepen them, and spend more time in them. Also, though we may feel like God can't change us until we spend at least 51% of our mental time on things of the Spirit, this is untrue. God's Spirit is unleashed in our lives to a disproportionate degree when we set our minds on the things of the Spirit.

2) Keep in step with the Spirit

Both Galatians 5 and Romans 8 speak of being "led by the Spirit".

Gal. 5:18 speaks of being "*led by the Spirit*" is part of "*walking by the Spirit*" (vs 16).

Rom. 8:14 speaks of "*being led by the Spirit*" as part of walking according to the Spirit.

Notice what Paul says in Gal. 5:25 (read). Here, the NIV is a better translation: "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with [NASB - "walk by"] the Spirit." The verb (stoichew) is different than the general verb "walk" (peripatew) in 5:16. It means to "walk in a line, to proceed under another's direction." It was sometimes used to describe soldiers who marched in response to the directions of their commanding officer.

Definition: To "keep in step with the Spirit" means to be alert and responsive to the Spirit's personal guidance in your life.

The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal Force that you learn to tap into and use to accomplish your agenda for your life. The Holy Spirit is a *Person* who personally guides you into God's will and then empowers you to accomplish this as you choose to respond to his guidance.

God does not simply throw you the rules and expect you to learn them and carry them out in an impersonal, mechanical way ("I'LL WORK ON RULES 1-5 TODAY, 6-10 TOMORROW . . ."). He gives you his Spirit to apply his will to your life in a very personal way (RIJKS MUSEUM Amsterdam - two ways to tour the museum: pay money for a map or get a personal guide. A personal guide is always better than a brochure). Jesus did this when he was with his disciples (EXAMPLES?), he promised that when he left he would send "another Counselor" to render the same help (Jn. 14:16).

Avoid 2 dangerous extremes:

This whole area is messy because it is personal and subjective--there's no way to get around it. Because of this, Christians tend to polarize into two extreme camps.

1. *Being led by the Spirit is ONLY a supernatural event* -- it is a substitute for using the mind and common sense -- the need to find supernatural explanation for everything that happens. They claim that the Holy Spirit guides them about what clothes to wear, what route to take to work, what food to order from the menu, etc. They claim that God talks to them this way virtually all the time, that his voice is unmistakable, and that you must be unspiritual unless you can claim the same thing. It becomes an excuse for laziness, anti-intellectualism, and even rebellion against God that soils his reputation ("The Holy Spirit is leading me to divorce my wife and marry my secretary." "God led me to spend two hours sharing Christ with my co-worker instead of doing my job.").
2. *Others, the leading of the Spirit has NO supernatural component at all.* Those usually more cerebral by temperament, feel uncomfortable with any subjective or

unpredictable feature of Christianity. They want and sometimes demand irrefutable proof that a personal guidance was from God--and since this is not possible, they view the whole subject as a waste of time. They use the excesses as an excuse to reject the whole area. This is the danger of deism--affirming God's existence but denying that he is personally involved in our lives in ways that we can recognize and cooperate with -- reducing spirituality to a recipe of Bible verses and safe formulae. This leads to a "Christianity" that is safe, predictable, boring--and (sometimes) autonomous from God (EXAMPLES: no room for spontaneity in meetings; no risk-taking in evangelism).

Since God wants us to "keep in step with the Spirit," there must be a way to recognize his guidance and avoid both of these extremes . . .

Recognizing the Spirit's guidance

God's Spirit will never guide us in a direction that contradicts God's Word because the same Spirit who guides us also authored God's Word. He will always guide you consistently with the two biblical priorities for your life: moral integrity and serving love. The following context of Gal. 5:25 speaks of the Spirit's guidance in both of these areas.

- Moral correction (Read Gal. 5:26).

If you keep in step with the Spirit, he will guide you *away from* attitudes and behaviors that are destructive to you and God's reputation--like boasting and envy. He will speak to your conscience--directly, through the Word or another Christian--sensitizing it and arresting your attention on different issues at different times. We sometimes call this "the conviction of the Spirit."

Sinful attitudes & actions as a new Christian (LYING; GETTING HIGH)

Becoming more in-depth as we mature (CRITICAL SPIRIT, sold out to worldly rather than Godly priorities, etc.).

(Commend for honesty on class assignments)

Maturing Christians become increasingly responsive to God's moral correction. (Heb. 3:7,8; Eph. 4:30; Ps. 32:8-10) We don't have to wait until someone confronts us or until we go up on blocks spiritually. We become suspicious of our natural tendency to resist input from others.

Warning: Be sure to view this activity of the Spirit from the perspective of God's grace, or you will fall prey to satanic accusation. God corrects you because he loves you, not to reject you. His correction is redemptive (to urge you to move forward with him) rather than retributive ("Look how horrible you are! You might as well give up walking with God."). Read Heb. 12:6,10.

- Servant direction (Read Gal. 6:1,2).

If you keep in step with the Spirit, he will guide you into attitudes and behaviors that serve other people--like restoring fallen Christians and bearing one another's burdens. Sometimes, this can be very specific: PHILIP IN ACTS 8; Leading to witness, help, encourage, comfort. Sometimes, this is a growing passion for a certain area of service; sometimes heightened sensitivity to opportunities to serve.

This doesn't mean that we should only serve people when we get such guidance. We should adopt and cultivate a lifestyle of servanthood--and know that as we do so, God's Spirit will guide us personally into deeds and areas of service for which we are uniquely suited. "You can't steer a ship that's not moving."

This also doesn't mean that thinking and planning ahead eliminates or quells the Spirit's leading (God planned salvation, Heb. 10:24; Eph. 5:15).

If you lack the Spirit's guidance, prayerfully consider...

I am not suggesting that you should experience dramatic guidance from the Spirit every day.

Sometimes God just wants us to follow him in the ways we know and trust him. But I don't think it is normal or healthy to chronically lack the Spirit's guidance. If this is where you are at, it is very correctable. Consider these possible reasons.

- ...do you ask for the Spirit's guidance?

James says that many times we do not receive from God simply because we do not ask him (Jas. 4:2). In my experience, this has been the case with the Spirit's guidance. I tend to want to put it on "auto-pilot"--selecting the moral areas I want to work on and service I want to do--and just staying on familiar ground. It's so much more productive and exciting to present myself to God each day/situation and ask him for his guidance.

- ...do you *want* to submit to the Spirit's guidance?

We may receive little guidance from the Spirit (even when we ask) because we are unwilling in a fundamental way to entrust our lives to God's agenda.

Sometimes this is because we don't understand God's grace and unconditional love. When this is the case, we will tend to view the idea of responding to God's guidance as a confining, crushing duty/burden. If you understand grace, however, it will be an invitation to experience more of God's goodness and faithfulness and wisdom.

There have been times in my Christian life (even after understanding grace) when I wanted God to be a consultant rather than the ruler of my life. "I'm wondering what I want to do in this area. Why don't you let me know your opinion--and I'll take that into consideration as I decide my course of action." When we ask with this attitude, God is likely to reply "Save your breath. Let me know when you're ready to obey my guidance even before you know what it is."

This is the precious lesson David learned from God. David made many, many mistakes--but he knew that God was good and he entrusted his life to him (read Ps. 32:8-10). "Don't be a moral mule! When I convict you about an issue, listen to me! Don't make me take greater measures to convince you to make a course correction." One sign of spiritual growth is that we don't always have to be beat over the head by others or consequences. We begin to respond to the Lord's initial, gentle conviction.

3) Sow to the Spirit

Paul began using an agricultural metaphor toward the end of Galatians 5, describing the *results* of walking by the Spirit as the "*fruit* of the Spirit." After explaining how to "keep in step with the Spirit" in Gal. 5:25-6:5, he returns to the agricultural metaphor in 6:7-9 (read). His point is obvious--you reap what you sow. This is not Paul's version of karmic law (what goes around comes around), but rather a basic principle of cause and effect in spiritual growth.

If you sow to your own fallen nature, you will reap "corruption"--which is not damnation, but the lifestyle described in Gal. 5:19-21a as the "deeds of the flesh" (read). If you sow to the Spirit, you will reap "eternal life"--which refers not to heaven, but to the "fruit of the Spirit" as described 5:22,23 (read). If you want to reap a good spiritual harvest in your life, you must sow consistently to the Spirit.

The key principle here is that the results don't show up immediately, but later--they always show up. You may choose to get involved in a porn habit because it provides immediate pleasure and escape--but you will reap an eventual harvest of corruption (dissatisfaction with marital sex; bondage to sexual lust; arrested relational development). Or you may choose to get involved in a spiritual habit like Bible memorization. It will not be immediately pleasurable--but you will reap an eventual harvest of spiritual health (Ps. 1 RESULTS). The Bible provides direction on the "sowing" that leads to spiritual growth.

Definition: "Sowing to the Spirit" is participating regularly in the "means of growth."

What does it look like to "sow to the Spirit?" It means to consistently participate in those activities that the Bible says will eventually result in spiritual growth. Theologians often call these activities the "means of grace." We like to call them the "means of growth." Here's what John Stott, one of the greatest Bible teachers of the 20th century, says about this passage:

(John R.W. Stott) "(If Paul) speaks in Galatians 5:22 of the harvest of the Spirit, he writes in 6:8 that we are to sow to the Spirit, and then we reap what we sow. Whether we reap the fruit of the Spirit depends on whether we sow to the Spirit. The seeds we sow to the Spirit that produce this harvest are . . . a disciplined use of the means of grace. That is, daily prayer and meditation on the Scriptures, . . . reading Christian books, making Christian friends, and getting engaged in Christian service. It is by a disciplined use of these means of grace that we grow in grace, and the Holy Spirit within us is able to produce the beauty of holiness." (John R.W. Stott, "The Unforbidden Fruit", Christianity Today, Aug 17, 1992, p. 36)

The means of growth are:

If you want a passage that captures most of these means of growth, look at Acts 2:42. 3000 people have just begun a relationship with God by receiving Christ and being indwelt by the Holy Spirit. In 2:43-47, Luke describes the dynamic spiritual vitality and fruitfulness of these people. In 2:42, he describes how they "sowed to the Spirit" (read).

(Acts 2:42*) And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Notice *what* they sowed:

- "The apostles' teaching" - This refers to learning the Bible, especially the New Testament's teaching about God's grace.
- "Fellowship" - This refers to sharing God's truth and love with one another in the context of Christian community and personal relationships. Remember, a key element of "fellowship" includes serving love. Love is not only a fruit of the Spirit; it is also a dynamic that produces fruit. You can see that Paul includes this in "sowing to the Spirit," because after enunciating this principle in Gal. 6:7-9, he says 6:10 (read). We should do good to all people--not just Christians, but also those who don't know Christ. As we give ourselves away in love to serve others for Christ's sake, the Holy Spirit vitalizes us spiritually and gradually transforms our lives. And this would include sharing Christ through word and deed. Therefore, "fellowship" as a means of growth includes both giving and receiving the life of Christ with other believers.

(Gal. 6:10) So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

- "Prayer" - This refers to individual, private communication with God, corporate prayer (see Acts 4,12), and ongoing prayer (1 Thess. 5:17). Note: "The breaking of bread" is a little ambiguous. It may refer to the Lord's Supper, which then connects it to prayer and emphasizes thanksgiving. Or it may refer to having meals together (Acts 2:46), which then connects it with fellowship.
- "Discipline of the Holy Spirit" - to the means of growth mentioned in this passage, remember to include the means that God initiates through discipline of his Spirit (week 6).

Notice *how* they sowed:

"They were continuously devoting themselves to . . ." Luke goes out of his way to emphasize that they initiated this sowing ("devoted themselves to") and they did this consistently ("continually"). This is the open secret to their vitality and fruitfulness.

Summary: "Sowing to the Spirit" means building a lifestyle that centers around these means of growth. This is also the context in which you will get more personal guidance from the Spirit. In my experience, the most common cause of spiritual stagnation and sickness is neglect of the means of growth (TEENAGE GIRLS WITH EATING). We like to think our spiritual problems have obscure, exotic causes--but this is always the first place to look.

Practical tips concerning the means of growth

1. Be sure you approach the means of growth under grace.

In week three, we saw that the first element of walking by the Spirit was viewing every major area of your life from the perspective of God's grace (our new identity), rather than apart from grace. Here is another key area.

What does it look like to view these apart from grace?

As a young person, I was familiar with these practices--but I viewed them in a superficial, formalistic, impersonal way. God expected me to go to church, hear Bible readings, and recite some memory verses, memorize some prayers. I assumed that I had to perform these arbitrary religious practices to get or keep God's acceptance. They had no personal relevance to my life. Not surprisingly, I hated them, and ran from them as soon as I was old enough to say "No" to my parents.

It's amazing how my perspective changed once I personally received Christ. Now I knew that God had permanently accepted me. Now I had God's Spirit indwelling me and introducing me to a personal relationship with God that I could enjoy anywhere and any time. Now I viewed the means of growth as God does, as avenues through which I could relate personally with God and receive his life-changing power.

It is possible to be a true Christian and still approach the means of growth apart from grace. To the extent that you participate in them simply out of mindless habit, or so you can be socially

acceptable to your Christian friends, you are doing this and they will become dry and lifeless. One clear sign that we do NOT approach them under grace would be when bad times and suffering befall us and we complain, "but I've been praying, studying the Word, serving...why would he let this happen?" But this is so easy to turn around . . .

2. You will probably need to cultivate a taste for some (or all) of the means of growth.

This point tempers the first point with some needed realism.

I started running about 21 years ago because I was starting to gain weight and I knew I needed to get in cardiovascular shape. I found out that I could get the biggest bang for my buck by maintaining my target heart rate for 20 minutes, three times a week. The cheapest way to do this was jogging. It was (to say the least) not that enjoyable to begin with. I was out of shape, my stride was poor, and all I thought about the whole time was how much my muscles hurt and how much farther I had to go. But after a while, as I began to experience less stress, better sleep, more vigor, etc., I came to enjoy it more and even increase my running distance. Today it is one of the most enjoyable activities in my life. I run even in miserable weather, and I genuinely miss it when I can't run.

If you understand what I am saying about physical exercise, the same principle applies to the means of growth--only with much greater benefits (read 1 Tim. 4:7b,8). For a variety of reasons (newness, fleshly aversion), it is normal to initially find these activities uncomfortable and intimidating. But as you stick with them by faith, you experience the good results and develop increasing enjoyment of them.

(1 Tim. 4:7,8) On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; (8) for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

Word: Studying the Bible on your own can be confusing at first. This is why preparing teaching helps so much. When you're trying to explain a passage to someone else, it becomes clearer to you and more exciting.

Prayer: Prayer with other believers may feel strange to begin with, but it will help you to learn more quickly how to pray well and it can become a wonderful way to relate to God and your Christians friends simultaneously.

3. Remember that you need *all* of the means of growth.

Because of the previous point, the temptation is to specialize in those means of growth that you find easiest and most enjoyable, while neglecting the ones that are more difficult for you. You may be tempted to believe that your specialization in some will compensate for your neglect of others. This is a serious error.

The means of growth are like Food Groups. You need a balanced diet for healthy growth. Neglect of any one can eventually result in a complete breakdown in spiritual growth. The means of growth are also interconnected, so that genuine progress in any one requires involvement in all (EXAMPLES).

Summary Of Walking By The Spirit:

Learning to walk by the Spirit is an art that takes practice. It's a lot like learning to ride a bike which is difficult because you have to simultaneously do three things: balance, steer, and pedal. Similarly, walking by the Spirit involves the three things described above. With practice, this becomes easier and more natural--though never as natural as riding a bike because there is the consistent opposition of the flesh and Satan.

The Filling of the Holy Spirit

The term "filled" (Greek: *pleroo*) means to be "characterized by." To be filled with the Holy Spirit means to be characterized by the Holy Spirit. In the following passages, several truths concerning the filling of the Spirit emerge.

1. Whereas Christians receive the baptism by the Spirit only once (1 Cor 12:13*), it is possible for us to receive repeated "in-fillings." This was the case with the early church, and Luke is careful to note that this was the key to their vitality and effectiveness in evangelism (see Acts 1:8; 2:4; 4:8,31; 6:3,5; 7:55; 9:17; 13:9,52).
2. The "filling of the Spirit" is connected with our free will. An individual Christian can choose to be or not to be filled.

(Eph. 5:18) And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

"Be filled with" is present (continuous) tense, imperative mood, and passive voice. Therefore, it is helpful to consider the filling of the Holy Spirit as the result of a Christian's openness to the Spirit's influence. Note the qualities of being filled described in vv. 19 & 20 cf. Col. 3:16

3. In Paul's letters, the term "filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18) is synonymous with the terms "walking by/according to the Spirit" (see Rom. 8:4-II; Gal. 5:16,18,25). All of these terms emphasize our volition in availing ourselves to the Holy Spirit, and they describe similar results of spiritual vitality.
4. "Grieving the Holy Spirit" (Eph. 4:30) and "quenching the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19) apparently refer to two different ways in which Christians resist the filling of the Holy Spirit in their lives. In a sense, then, they refer to the opposite of being filled with the Spirit.
 - Although "grieving the Spirit" is not clearly defined, the context (Eph. 4:25-32) makes it clear that it involves willfully disregarding the Holy Spirit's *moral* guidance.

(Eph. 4:29-31) Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

This is not just whenever you sin, because the Holy Spirit works personally according to his priorities. But when he has put his finger on an area and you say "No, not now," you are hardening your heart and you may wind up wandering around in a spiritual wilderness.

- "Quenching the Spirit" is also not clearly defined, but the context (1 Thess. 5:20-22) indicates that it involves disregarding the Holy Spirit's efforts to direct and edify the church through various gifted members.

(1 Thess. 5:19-21) Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good and abstain from every form of evil.

Quenching the Spirit can include such things as promoting a clergy/laity separation in the church rather than diligently equipping & deploying gifted members. We strongly encourage and make time for sharing in meetings and extemporaneous prayer to provide opportunities for people moved by the Spirit to speak up.

Memory Verses

Romans 8:4-14** - extended passage on walking according to the Spirit

Galatians 5:16-25** - extended passage on walking according to the Spirit

Acts 2:42* - consistent participation in the Word, prayer and fellowship were keys to their spiritual vitality