

Walking in the Spirit

by Jason Peebles

Perhaps the greatest gift that Christians have, other than salvation itself, is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1:13 says that when you believe in Christ you are “*sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.*” **Think of it! The God of the universe actually comes to live IN you by His Spirit! John 14:17 says, “For he dwells with you and shall be IN YOU.”** This Study Guide will give you an overview of what it means to walk in the Spirit.

Walking Together

The New Testament repeatedly tells us to **WALK IN THE SPIRIT**. The apostle Paul tells us that it is the key to victory. For example, Romans 8:1 says, “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.*” Galatians 5:16 says, “*Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*” **As we will see, walking in the Spirit includes many exciting areas -- divine guidance, the still small voice, the fruit of the Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, and much more.**

Before we examine some of these areas in particular, let’s take a moment to consider the general idea of WALKING with God. Throughout the Bible, God expresses His desire to walk with us. Even in the Garden of Eden the idea of “walking”

with God is there. Genesis 3:8 says, “*And they heard the voice of the Lord God WALKING in the garden in the cool of the day.*” Evidently, God spent time each day walking with Adam and Eve and talking with them. What an awesome thought! Jesus highlights this same idea of walking with God when He spoke of the Holy Spirit in John 14:16. **He said that he was sending the Holy Spirit to be our “Comforter” -- which literally means “one called alongside” (as in walking beside you to assist you).** Thus, it may help if you will imagine yourself WALKING WITH SOMEONE. Perhaps you can recall a special time when you walked with a loved one along the seashore or on a hike. Think about it. You talked together, shared ideas, laughed, and enjoyed one another’s company. Dear friend, walking with God is no different! **Get rid of the notion that walking in the Spirit has to be some kind of weird mystical experience. Walking in the Spirit simply means that you are spending time with God, fellowshiping with Him, and asking for His guidance.** It means that you are walking with the best friend that you will ever have who wants to help you in every way possible.

Witness of the Spirit

OK, let’s examine some specific aspects of this wonderful WALK that we are privileged to have. There are a number of things that people typically experience when they learn to walk in the Spirit.

The first thing that most people experience is what the Bible calls the WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT. Romans 8:16 says, “*The Spirit himself bears WITNESS with our hearts that we are the children of God.*” Even when you don’t know much about the Bible or spiritual matters, the Holy Spirit has a way of prompting your heart and mind. If you think about it, you can probably remember times when this happened to you. Perhaps it was a sudden awareness that danger was near; or it may have come as a persistent thought that you should stop doing something that you were doing. You may not have realized it at the time, but it was God trying to get your attention to help you. It is also the **WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT** that brings people to Christ. The chief goals of the Holy Spirit are to bring us to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and then teach us how to abide in Him (1 Jn 2:27).

Call it an inner voice, a nudge, a prompting, or whatever – in any case, it is an inner witness in your heart. In a court of law, a “witness” is someone who offers testimony and evidence regarding a matter. Likewise, the witness of the Spirit is testimony and evidence that the Holy Spirit is at work in your life. As wonderful as the witness of the Spirit is, it is not intended to stop there.

Led by the Spirit

As you grow spiritually, God wants the inner witness to become more and more developed. God wants you to move beyond the occasional nudge of the Spirit to a lifestyle of being LED BY THE SPIRIT. We’ve all heard people say -- “*I should have listened to that little voice!*” They usually say that after they have messed up. Thus, it is important for you to be increasingly sensitive to the inner witness and follow it. This can only happen as you spend more time in prayer and the Word (Acts 6:3,4). Start praying and telling God that you want to be **LED BY THE SPIRIT.**

Romans 8:14 says, “*For as many as are LED by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*” This progression of growing from an occasional “witness” to being “led” is very similar to the development of a child. In the beginning, children are content just to rest in the arms of their mother and father and enjoy their love and cuddles. Certainly, this is an essential part of healthy development. However, there comes a point in a child’s development where they must grow up, learn to walk, and start making good decisions. Inevitably, a child’s “will” challenges the “will” of the parents. Good parents try to be patient and teach their children how to make good choices. “*Don’t touch the hot stove!*” is more than a random rule that parents create – it is a principle of safety for the child. Hopefully the child learns to listen and obey. But it takes time. And so it is in the walk of the Spirit. **In John 5:30 Jesus said, “I can of my own self do nothing. I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father who has sent me.” Let this be the cry of your heart too! Jesus set the example – seek the will of the Father!** Seeking the will of the Father will launch you into the exciting adventure that God has for you. Train yourself to quickly obey the leading of the Spirit.

Fruit of the Spirit

As you grow in the “witness” and “leading” of the Spirit, one of the primary areas that God will exert His influence in is your character development – what the Bible calls the **FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT**. **God wants to give you a personal-ity makeover! Your Heavenly Father wants you to put on His nature of agape love (1 Jn 4:8).**



For example, if you have struggled with outbursts of anger, the Holy Spirit will no doubt deal with you about that area. Or, it may be some other area – impatience, unkindness, the type of language that you use, or a tendency to always criticize others, etc. **As the Holy Spirit prompts you about various areas in your life, it is vital that you make an uncompromising decision to let Him change you.** No, you will not be perfect – not by any means. There will be times when you fall short. But the point is that you are allowing Him to change you little by little. You are learning to put on His nature of love and put off your own stubborn way (Eph 4:20-32). Galatians 5:22 says, *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law.”* You see, when you have the fruit of the Spirit in your life, you will want to be a blessing to others. You will want to express God’s love and character. **The only way to do this is to allow the Holy Spirit to do it through you. In your own power, your patience may fall short – but that’s why you must learn to YIELD!** You may feel like cursing and popping off with unkind words – but again, that’s why you must learn to YIELD! Ephesians 4:20 says, *“Put off your former conduct, the old man.... and put on the new man.”*

Gifts of the Spirit

Another part of walking in the Spirit concerns God’s power and ability -- what the Bible calls the **GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT**. Just as the CHARACTER of God is important, so also is the ABILITY of God. 1 Corinthians 14:1 says, *“Follow after love (God’s character) and desire spiritual gifts (God’s ability).”* Both are important.

Even on your best day, your abilities cannot match what God can do. **God has made provision for us by “packaging” His abilities in what the Bible calls the gifts (or manifestations) of the Holy Spirit.** The gifts of the Spirit are listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. In this short study we can only touch on this important area. However, let me share several keys that have helped me through the years.



First of all, it will be very helpful if you adopt the approach that ALL THE GIFTS of the Holy Spirit are available to you at any given moment. *It only makes sense. Think about it.* If the Holy Spirit dwells in you (and He certainly does if you are a Christian) then it only makes sense that everything that the Holy Spirit has and is resides IN YOU -- at least in seed form. Just as the fruit of the Spirit is in you (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, etc) – so are the gifts of the Spirit. They may not be in manifestation right now, but they are in you because the Holy Spirit is in you. They are there, waiting to be utilized as you learn to yield to them. This is true for the fruit and gifts. For example, one gift is called *“the word of wisdom.”* This gift is especially important when you need God’s plan on “how” to accomplish a goal. You should develop the habit of whispering quick prayers that basically say: *“Lord, I thank you for the word of wisdom and ask you to manifest YOUR PLAN in my heart and mind. Give me your plan on how to accomplish this*

goal.” There is also a gift called “*the discerning of spirits.*” This gift is especially helpful in business matters when you need to discern the motives and intents of other people and/or the activity of evil influences. You can learn to pray, “*Lord, if these people have wrong intents, then warn me and help me discern it.*” The more you learn about the gifts of the Holy Spirit the more you will appreciate what God has done by “packaging” his abilities for us.

Another key that has helped me is to understand that the gifts of the Spirit tend to cluster together and operate together. I want to give you a brief organizational chart that will help you grasp this idea. Additionally, my experience is that there seems to be a progression with the gifts. The Speaking gifts tend to activate the Revelation gifts - and these in turn help you move to the Power gifts. I hope this chart will help you grow in the wonderful gifts of the Spirit:

GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1 Corinthians 12:8-10

I. SPEAKING GIFTS

1. Tongues
2. Interpretation of tongues
3. Prophecy

II. REVELATION GIFTS

1. Word of wisdom
2. Word of knowledge
3. Discerning of spirits

III. POWER GIFTS

1. Gift of faith
2. Working of miracles
3. Gifts of healing

Filled with the Spirit

There are many more areas that we could examine, but the last one that I want to touch on in this brief study is what the Bible calls being **FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT**. Ephesians 5:18 clearly tells us to “*BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.*” **First of all, the tense of this verse is a command not a suggestion. It’s not an option for Christians! In fact, nothing can really work in your life the way that God intends without it. Second,**

in the original language it actually says -- “*but be being filled*” or “*keep on being filled with the Spirit.*” In other words, it’s not a one-time experience – it is something that is ongoing. God doesn’t want us to walk with Him one day and not the next. Too many Christians tend to move in and out of their walk with God. Perhaps they go to Church and have an experience that lasts for a few days, but afterwards they return to their old patterns. They need to understand what it means to “**KEEP ON being filled**” with the Spirit moment by moment. It’s very much like the gas tank in a car. It must be continually filled with fuel if the car is going to operate.

Through the years, I’ve heard all types of strange definitions for being filled with the Spirit. It’s like a smorgasbord of religious ideas that range from emotionalism to legalism. **But the truth of the matter is that it really boils down to one main thing -- DAILY DEPENDENCE ON CHRIST.** One key that will bring clarity to this issue is to simply substitute the word “influenced” every time you see the word “filled.” Thus, Ephesians 5:18 could be translated, “***BUT KEEP ON BEING INFLUENCED BY THE SPIRIT.***” Influenced how? **Keep on being sensitive to the inner witness; keep on being led by the Spirit; keep on yielding to the fruit and gifts. Continue walking with God!**

Regardless of the wonderful experiences that you may have had, at some point it has to be “walked out” on the job, at home, at school, and in your daily life. Can you learn to be “filled” (influenced) by the Holy Spirit anywhere at any time? Absolutely! Start by maintaining an inner posture of trusting Christ and asking for His wisdom. **In time, it will become just as natural as breathing to pause and be sensitive to the things we’ve taught here: the inner witness, the leading, the fruit, and the gifts.** As you learn to live this way, you will be walking in the Spirit. Just like a branch must stay connected to the vine, so we must stay connected to our Lord and Savior (John 15:1-17). The Holy Spirit is your Helper to do just that.

Dear friend, I pray that you will discover all the exciting dimensions of walking in the Spirit and live each day abiding in Christ. ■ -- Jason Peebles

Key Memory Verse:

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.”

Romans 8:1

Prayer for Walking in the Spirit

“Father, thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for my sins. I accept His sacrifice and commit my life to Him. I want your will and your guidance in my life. Teach me to walk in the Holy Spirit. Help me to yield to the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit more and more. Thank you for your great love. In Jesus Name – Amen.”

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