

## The Power of the Gospel

# 14

## The Momentum of the Spirit

In the last lesson we had a look at the “what” of walking in the Spirit. We saw that it involved a change of focus – from self to God – and that this change of focus is described by the Bible as “faith.” Now, in this lesson, we will examine the “how” of walking in the Spirit – the practical details of how the Christian life works on a day-to-day basis.

### How to Walk in the Spirit

At the beginning of your studies at the Online Bible College, we listed three parts to the transforming work of God’s Spirit in your life. Let’s have a look at them again to see how they apply to walking in the Spirit.

#### ***Revelation***

The starting point for walking in the Spirit *must* be a revelation of the finished work of the Cross. Without an understanding that God has *totally* dealt with the old life so that you can walk in the new life, you will never be able walk in the Spirit. The key point of *revelation* for walking in the Spirit is:

- ➔ I am dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (**Romans 6:6,10-11**)

#### ***Repentance***

Repentance is your response to a revelation from God. It is a change of direction and a change of focus. The key point of *repentance* for walking in the Spirit is:

- ➔ I now put off the old self and put on the new self (**Ephesians 4:22-24**)

This repentance is a one-time decision, based on a revelation that “I am crucified with Christ.” But it also has a daily outworking. If the Holy Spirit convicts you that you have been walking in the flesh, your response should be repentance.

The old self is dead, but by slipping into a fleshly walk, you have, in effect, “dug up” the old self. So how do you respond? Not by trying to kill off the old self again, but by putting it off. You put it back in the grave, where it belongs. Anytime God brings a revelation that your life is not in line with the new self he has created you

to be, your obligation is to put off the old and put on the new.

## ***Reality***

It is only when the two previous steps are complete (you have had a *revelation* of the finished work of the Cross and you have responded in *repentance* by turning from the old and putting on the new) that the third step (the *reality* of walking in the Spirit) can happen. God now gets to work and energizes the truth of his Word to make it a reality in your life. The key point of *reality* for walking in the Spirit is:

- Today I will access the grace and power of the Holy Spirit to live a life pleasing to God (**Romans 8:2,5-6**)

This is what it means to walk in the Spirit. All you are doing is accessing what God has already made available to you. You have already received “everything you need for life and godliness” (**2 Peter 1:3**). Now you are called to walk in the reality of what you have already received.

## **The Daily Walk**

The starting point for walking in the Spirit is an understanding that you can only ever walk with the Lord *one day at a time*. The basic unit of time used by the Lord in your relationship with him is not one hour, nor is it one week. It is *today*.

Many Christians are *weekly* Christians. They go to church on Sunday. They might even go to extra meetings during the week. But their schedule with the Lord is still based on a weekly approach to the Christian life.

God is not after *weekly* Christians. He is after *daily* Christians. He wants your relationship with him to revolve around a daily schedule, not a weekly one.

### **Read Psalm 118:24**

*This* is the day that the Lord has made. Yesterday has gone. Tomorrow is not yet here. All you have with the Lord is today.

We need to understand that the basis of the Christian life (and the basis of walking in the Spirit) is a *daily* drawing upon God’s grace. Jesus taught us to live our lives on a daily basis:

- To pray on a daily basis (**Luke 11:3**)
- To forgive on a daily basis (**Luke 17:4; Ephesians 4:26**)
- To take up our cross on a daily basis (**Luke 9:23**)

### **Read Hebrews 3:13**

Far too many Christians try to survive on a weekly diet in God’s Word. Their spiritual batteries are recharged on a Sunday and they just manage to survive until next Sunday’s re-charging. But God has designed for our spiritual batteries to be recharged daily. Today is the day when God wants to walk with you. Today is the day he wants to speak to you. Not just next Sunday. Not just next meeting.

But today!

### Read Hebrews 4:7

Notice how the Lord has set aside a certain day for you to meet with him. That day is called “today!” This is probably the most important lesson in learning how to walk in the Spirit. Each day is a brand new today! Each morning is a new start in your walk with the Lord.

## Today’s Grace

### Read Lamentations 3:22-23

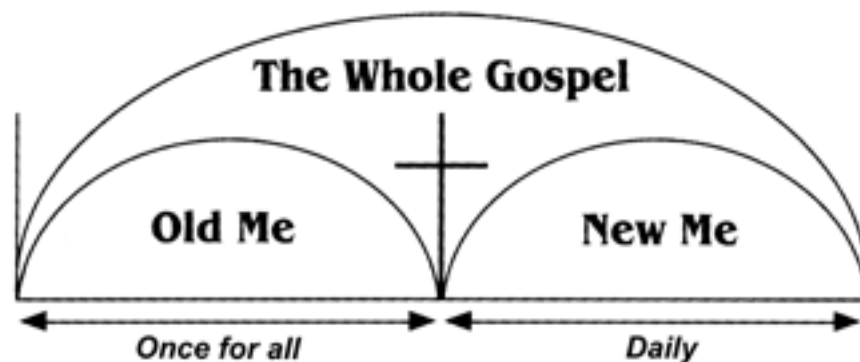
There is a freshness about God’s grace in your life. His mercies are “new every morning.” His faithfulness is expressed in unique ways each and every day.

The Bible describes two things that are “sufficient” for the day:

- Trouble (**Matthew 6:34**)
- Grace (**2 Corinthians 12:9**)

God has special grace set aside for you today. It is not grace for yesterday, nor is it grace for tomorrow. It is grace for today. It is perfectly matched for today’s trouble – whatever you may need to face.

### Read Hebrews 4:16



As we have seen already, the Gospel can be divided into two main parts:

It’s important to never get confused between the two parts of the Gospel. We are not called do the work of the Cross daily – this was a once-for-all work done for us by Christ 2000 years ago. But we *are* called to see that salvation outworked in our lives on a daily basis. God’s solution to the Old Me was “once for all.” God’s plan for the New Me, however, is a daily plan.

Once we have captured the significance of this daily dynamic in our walk with God, we are ready to embark on a daily journey of discovery hand-in-hand with God’s Spirit. This is what walking in the Spirit is all about.

## Daily Appointments with God

### Read Psalm 27:4

This cry of David's heart is the attitude that motivates a daily walk in the Spirit. Notice what David says:

“One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord *all the days of my life...*”

Many Christians find it hard to spend time with God. Reading the Bible is little more than a dry obligation. Praying is a religious duty, something that *must* be done in order to please God. Without realizing it, their prayer times have become tainted with self-effort, making them dry and uninteresting to the Christian and displeasing to God.

But God has something far more exciting in store for you. Rather than being a dry duty, praying and reading the Bible are expressions of your personal relationship with God. God wants your times of fellowship with him to be fresh and exciting every day. These daily appointments with God are designed to be the high point of your day, rewarding for you and pleasing to God!

In order to understand how your daily walk with the Lord works, let's break the day up into three main parts: morning, noon and evening (note **Psalm 55:17**; **Daniel 6:10**). These three daily times of appointment with God can form a powerful structure to your walk in the Spirit.

### ***Morning***

Every walk begins with a first step and walking in the Spirit begins with the time you spend with the Lord each morning.

### Read Isaiah 50:4

This scripture was one of our first memory verses and describes the starting point of each day's walk with God. Your time with the Lord in the morning sets the pace for the rest of the day. Our very first morning study established the vital truth that God is not after 15 minutes with you. He is not after a half hour with you. He is not even after an hour or two with you. He is after the whole day.

Today belongs to the Lord. He is not just the Lord of your life. He is the Lord of today! And it is in the morning that this truth is established for you for today.

### Read Psalm 131:2

The secret to your morning time with the Lord is to “quiet your soul.” The voice of God is a quiet voice (read **1 Kings 19:11-13**). This “still small voice” (KJV) or “gentle whisper” (NIV) of God's Spirit can easily be drowned out by your anxious thoughts and the incessant noise of the world around you.

Many voices demand your attention – the needs of your family, the requirements

of your work and the anxieties of modern life. Television, billboards and neon advertising demand your attention. Your friends all have their own advice on how to be a success in life. And amid all this clamor, God wants to speak to you. He desires to reveal his perfect will for your life.

This is why your morning time with the Lord is so vital. Some Christians call their morning devotions their “quiet time.” It is not quiet because you don’t say anything. It is quiet because you have quietened your soul in order to hear from God.

Our advice is to set a regular pattern each morning with the Lord using, as an example, the following order:

- **Thank the Lord for the day:** Express your desire to walk with the Lord today. This identifies right at the start your principal request for today: to walk in close fellowship with God. This is like the first step of your walk with God today.
- **Worship the Lord:** Sing a song of adoration and worship to him. There is nothing better than worship to quieten your soul and switch your focus from yourself to God.
- **Read God’s Word:** Spend time with the Lord in the pages of his Word. As we established in the very first morning study (MS101-01), there is an intimacy with God to be found in reading his Word. That is what you are after during this time. It is not so much a study of the Bible as much as it is a devotional meditation in the Bible.
- **Talk to the Lord:** Speak to God about what his Word says to you. Allow that Word to wash over you. The Lord may do one of a number of things during this time. He may challenge you to obey his Word. He may convict you of sin that you need to deal with before him. He may encourage you to be strong in his grace.
- **Join the Lord in prayer:** Now you’re ready to lay your other requests before him. But this should not just be a “shopping list” of requests presented to God. When you pray, you are joining with God in prayer to see his will and purpose performed in your life and in the lives of others (see [Matthew 6:10](#)). Be led by God’s Spirit during this time – in fact, learning to hear from God during your morning prayer is a vital step in learning to hear from God as you walk through the rest of the day.

This is not meant to be a rigid formula. You may already have your own pattern of devotions in the morning, and we encourage you to continue in this. Structured devotions are like the scaffolding set up around a building under construction. What’s important is not the scaffolding but the building. In the same way, in your morning devotions, what’s important is the actual time you spend with the Lord, not the way you go about doing this.

The purpose of the morning time of devotions is to set the pace for the rest of the day. Some Christians ask, “How much time should I spend with the Lord each

morning?” There is no set answer to this. In fact, the best answer of all is:

*You need to take as much time as you require to kickstart your walk with God for the rest of the day.*

If five or ten minutes is enough to kickstart your walk with God for the rest of the day, then five or ten minutes in the morning is your minimum. If you need half an hour in order to be walking with God throughout the rest of the day, then it is important to protect that first half an hour with the Lord. Remember: God is not just after your morning. He is after your whole day.

After a while you will notice an interesting thing begin to happen. If you are consistently spending quality time with the Lord each morning, you will discover that your hunger for God’s Word will deepen and your desire to spend time in God’s presence will increase. Ten minutes or half an hour is suddenly no longer enough to satisfy you. You are beginning to discover that God is waking you morning by morning to listen like one being taught.

## **Noon**

What counts after your morning devotions is your walk with God throughout the rest of the day. Just because your morning devotions have ended does not mean that your fellowship with God has ended. Your prayer and worship can continue right throughout the day – while in transit to work, while doing work, while taking a short break.

Walking in the Spirit is about having your eyes set firmly upon the Lord. It is about obeying the promptings of the Spirit. It is about have a “devotional reflex” (in prayer and in God’s Word) when facing problems in the day. This happens because the momentum of your morning devotions carries you right through the day. In worship, in prayer and in the promptings of God’s Word, your whole day has become a time of prayer and communion with God.

**Read Philippians 4:4-7**

**Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

These two passages underline the momentum of walking in the Spirit. Note the words “always,” “continually” and “in all circumstances.” This is only possible because a momentum in the Spirit has been established.

Think of what happens when you begin walking. After the first step or two, you develop an easy and practised gait, a momentum that carries you forward. It is the same with walking in the Spirit. Once you have begun your first steps at the beginning of the day, it is much easier to walk in the flow of God’s Spirit.

As you go through the day, however, it is often helpful to have another set appointment with the Lord, a time when you can specifically touch base with the Lord in focused prayer and worship (note **Acts 10:9**). This is the purpose of the noon appointment with the Lord. Your noon break can also be a valuable time to go over your memory verse and to rehearse the Word you read that morning.

## ***Evening***

### **Read Psalm 63:6-7**

The evening is a unique time with the Lord. There is something special about ending the day with the Lord in prayer. In the Old Testament, there was a special time of the day called the evening sacrifice.

### **Read Psalm 141:2**

The evening sacrifice was a time of thanksgiving and prayer expressed in the outstretching of one's hands to God. It brought closure to the day in the presence of the Lord.

Bringing closure to the day is a valuable exercise in walking in the Spirit. If there has been any point in the day where you have stumbled in your walk with the Lord, God does not want you to carry that over into the next day. Deal with it right there are then.

### **Read Ephesians 4:26-27**

In this verse Paul is actually quoting from the Old Testament. To get a feel for the entire passage which acts as a context for this verse, read the following scripture.

### **Read Psalm 4:4-8**

As we saw in **1 Thessalonians 5:17**, God expects us to “pray continually.” This can only happen if *the whole day* has been spent in prayer. This does not mean we need to be on our knees in intercessory prayer every second of the day. What it does mean is that your entire day is interlaced with prayer and fellowship with God. This then highlights the value of your evening appointment with the Lord. You are not simply performing a perfunctory evening prayer. You are actually finishing off one single, day-long time of prayer with God. Your evening appointment is your “amen” to a day of prayer.

The next morning, when you get up, you begin all over again. Now it is a fresh, new day with fresh, new grace. You once again take your first step of devotions with the Lord in the morning, beginning your walk in the Spirit which will take you through the day.

### **Read Psalm 65:8**

This pattern of walking in the Spirit starts with a conscious decision to “put off the old self...and put on the new self” (**Ephesians 4:22,24**). This act of repentance, which Peter calls “escap[ing] the corruption in the world...[and] participat[ing] in the divine nature” (**2 Peter 1:4**), merely kickstarts your walk with God. Now the Holy Spirit is present in your life to train you to walk in him. This is a habit – the most wonderful habit in the world – which you develop with his help.

The secret to living a life that pleases God is in the momentum of your walk. The more you walk in the Spirit, the more you will walk in the Spirit. God wants this

walk to become a sub-conscious attitude toward life. It does not take long before walking in the Spirit because an automatic expression of your life in Christ.

## The Secret to Overcoming Sin

But what about temptation? How does a Christian actually overcome sin *so that* they can walk in the Spirit?

### Read Galatians 5:16

This one verse provides an amazing insight into how walking in the Spirit works. Many Christians somehow read this verse back-to-front. For some reason, they believe that it reads something like this:

“I say then, *do not* fulfil the lust of the flesh and *then* you will be walking in the Spirit.”

Whether consciously or not, most Christians view walking in the Spirit in this way. If only, they think, they can resist the temptations of the flesh, then, by definition, they will be walking in the Spirit. What they don't realize, of course, is that this is the very definition of walking in the flesh. Even *trying* to live the Christian life in your own strength is walking in the flesh. No one can walk in the Spirit by walking in the flesh!

But what does Paul actually say in **Galatians 5:16**? Let's take a look at it in a few translations:

**New King James Bible:** “I say then: *Walk in the Spirit*, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

**New International Version:** “So I say, *live by the Spirit*, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

**New American Standard Bible:** “But I say, *walk by the Spirit*, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”

**New Living Translation:** “So I advise you to *live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit*. Then you *won't* be doing what your sinful nature craves.”

There is only one way to not gratify the flesh. And that is to walk in the Spirit. This is completely in line with the Gospel's whole approach to sin and temptation. The way that we overcome sin is by turning to God. We escape the corruption in the world by participating in the nature of God.

### Read Romans 13:13-14

Once again, Paul says the same thing. The way we behave decently is by clothing ourselves in Christ. The way that we *don't* think about how to gratify the desires for the flesh is by thinking about what the Spirit desires! (see again **Galatians 5:17-18**; **Romans 8:5-8**).



We've already seen that, just like a natural walk, walking in the Spirit develops its own momentum. The more you walk in the Spirit, the more you will walk in the Spirit! It is the momentum of this walk that carries you through temptation.

### Read James 4:7

We are given very explicit instructions by James on how to overcome temptation. We are told to do two things:

- Submit to God
- Resist the devil

Now we know that resisting the devil is something that we do at the moment of temptation, but many Christians believe that submitting to God is also something we do at the moment of temptation. At the point of temptation, they offer up a quick prayer of submission to God, then try to resist the devil. Yet this is not what James was meaning. It is *lifestyle* of submission to God that he was talking about, not point-of-temptation submission. When do you submit to God? At the beginning of the day. Walking in the Spirit, by its very nature, is submitting to God.

If you have your eyes fixed on the world (and by default, upon yourself), then temptation has an overwhelming momentum. It steamrolls you, because that is where you are facing. But if you are walking in the Spirit, then your eyes are fixed on another direction – the Lord himself.

It is not that you *cannot* be tempted (beware if you think you are invincible to Satan's attack – note Paul's warning in **1 Corinthians 10:12-13**). Rather, you have been pre-prepared to handle temptation. This is because walking in the Spirit develops a momentum whereby it is far easier to resist temptation. You are *already* submitted to God. Your focus is *already* upon the Lord. When temptation comes, you are able to respond out of that lifestyle of submission to God, resist the devil, and he *will* flee!

The old habits are broken by a new habit – that of walking in the Spirit. The old bias toward sin has been replaced by a new bias toward righteousness in Christ. The old power of sin and death has been overturned by a new power – “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (**Romans 8:2**).

## Keeping in Step with the Spirit

### Read Galatians 5:24-25

In these two verses, Paul brings to a climax his description of God's intention for the Christian life in Galatians 5:16-26. The *New International Version* translates it this way:

“Those who belong to Christ *have crucified* the [flesh] with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, *let us keep in step with the Spirit.*”

The whole feel of these final words that Paul brings on walking in the Spirit reflect

a sense of “marching in time” with the Holy Spirit. The Greek word that Paul uses, which is translated “keep in step” by the NIV, signifies to “walk in line.”<sup>1</sup> This same Greek word is used by Paul in **Romans 4:12**, where he describes those who are of the faith of Abraham as “walk[ing] in the footsteps of the faith...[of] our father Abraham.” In **Galatians 6:16**, this same Greek word is rendered “follow this rule” by the NIV. In **Philippians 3:16**, the same word is translated “live up to [what we have already attained]” and this is rendered by the *Amplified Bible* as “order our lives by [what we have already attained].”

Each of these translations of the same Greek word are accurate, but reflect different aspects of its meaning. Let’s review these meanings:

- ➔ Keep in step with the Spirit
- ➔ Walk in line with the Spirit
- ➔ Walk in the footsteps of the Spirit
- ➔ Follow the rule of the Spirit
- ➔ Order your life by the Spirit

A Christian learning to walk in the Spirit is like a baby taking its first steps. Even if you fall down, God encourages you to get up and begin walking again. Your walk in the Spirit will become stronger as you grow in Christ. Just like a natural baby, it is only by *walking* in the Spirit that you will *learn* to walk in the Spirit.

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<sup>1</sup> W. E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), p.664.