

# Abiding In Christ

## Lesson 5

### Spiritual Transformation

### Participant Guide

Leader Guide Bible Studies

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## Lesson 5

### Spiritual Transformation

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

*2 Corinthians 3:18*

### Introduction

God gave us the gift of his Spirit to be with us forever, and to make us more like Christ in our thoughts and desires throughout our lifetime. Yet only about 25% of adult Christians in the United States believe in the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. Christians who believe in the Holy Spirit include Evangelical Christians and about 15% of Mainstream Christians. The Barna and Pew Research Centers defines adult Christians in the United States into three groups; Evangelical, Mainstream, and Nominal Christians, by their response to two questions.

1. Do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?
2. Do you believe in the Bible as the accurate word of God?

Evangelical Christians from all denominations answer yes to both questions and comprise 10% of adult Christians in America. Mainstream Christians make up 40% of adult Christians and believe Christ is their Savior but have varying views regarding the Bible's accuracy, and its statements about Satan, hell, the divinity and sinlessness of Jesus, salvation by grace not by works, the importance of faith in everyday life, and sin – primarily regarding homosexuality and sex outside of marriage.

The most surprising group is Nominal Christians, comprising 50% of US adult Christians who answer no to both questions, they do not believe in Christ as the Savior or in the Bible as the word of God. Nearly one quarter of Nominal Christians do not believe in God as the all-powerful, all-knowing Creator of the universe. They do not believe their faith should be a guiding force in their daily lives or values.

Against this backdrop of diverse religious thinking among US adult Christians is a general disbelief in the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Is it any wonder that the largest growing religious segment in the United States is "Unaffiliated" or "None" when most Americans do not believe in the Spirit of God who desires to radically transform their lives?

### Discussion

1. The primary work of the Holy Spirit in our lives is to transform our minds to be Christ like and our lives so that we desire righteousness, loving God and others with all heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37-39 paraphrase). The Holy Spirit seems to have at least three ways of working in people's hearts. For some, a sin is taken away never to return; for example, a drug addict comes to Christ and is never plagued by the desire for drugs again. Others are baptized at a young age, mature in Christian families, and are spared the affliction of addiction and other life-threatening temptations. For others, like the disciple Paul, a "thorn in the flesh" remains despite the most

earnest and pleading prayers. For those who continue to struggle with the same sin, their struggle with sin or addiction becomes like the Israelites walk in the wilderness when Moses told them, "Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands" (Deuteronomy 8:2). How has the Holy Spirit worked at renewing your heart?

- a. Complete transformation and freedom from a sin?
- b. Lifelong faith and guidance
- c. Gradual, daily struggle and testing?

2. A dilemma Christians have is sinning after we receive Christ. We receive our salvation in Christ joyfully, assured our salvation is by God's grace and mercy through faith in Christ. Our faith is the free gift of God, not by our own good works, righteousness, or any merit in ourselves. Salvation is God's gift. But what about sanctification? We sin; so, we try harder, pray more, make promises to God and ourselves – we try to earn our sanctification. This was the pitfall of the Galatian church, so Paul gave them this warning:

<sup>Gal 3:3</sup> Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?

<sup>Gal 3:4</sup> Have you suffered so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing?

<sup>Gal 3:5</sup> Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?

- a. If sanctification is not about human effort, then how are sanctified? See also Romans 8:26-27

Romans 8:26 – <sup>Ro 8:26</sup> In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

<sup>Ro 8:27</sup> And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

3. The work of the holy Spirit in the life of believers is to transform our minds but we are not passive by-standers. In fact, we are in the fight of our lives, and God provides weapons of divine power for us to use against sin (2 Corinthians 10:4). Paul tells us to put on the full armor of God to resist sin and the devil. Paul's reference to the "full armor" means the complete armor, we are lacking nothing. Refer to the following scriptures and discuss how each of God's weapons is used to fight sin in our lives

2Co 10:4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

Eph 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Eph 6:11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

Eph 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Eph 6:13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Eph 6:14 Stand firm then, with the **belt of truth** buckled around your waist, with the **breastplate of righteousness** in place,

Eph 6:15 and with your feet fitted with the **readiness that comes from the gospel of peace**.

Eph 6:16 In addition to all this, take up the **shield of faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Eph 6:17 Take the **helmet of salvation** and the **sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**.

Eph 6:18 And **pray in the Spirit on all occasions** with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

a. How does each of the divine weapons protect us? Discuss a time when you have experienced their protection.

1. Truth

2. Righteousness

3. Readiness

4. Faith

5. Salvation

6. Sword of the Spirit – the word of God

When Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by Satan's lies, Jesus answered the Satan with scriptural truths, setting the example for all Christians. What are your favorite verses from the Bible that help you withstand temptations?

**The verse I find most encouraging these days is that God is testing my heart (to make me more like Christ):**

**Dt 8:2 Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.**

**I think what I find encouraging about this verse is that temptations become tests to strengthen me. Moses spoke these words to a generation raised in the wilderness of trial, and they would boldly enter the Promised Land, strengthened in their faith, and shaped by God's hand.**

7. Pray in the Spirit –

## **Gifts**

4. The Holy Spirit is God's gift to us to shape our character and to bring unity and peace to his children, his chosen people. Consider the qualities the Holy Spirit brings to us in the following verses:

**Gal 5:22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>Gal</sup>  
**5:23** gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

**Gal 5:24** Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

**Gal 5:25** Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

**Col 3:12** Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

**Col 3:13** Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

**Col 3:14** And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

- a. What stands out to you in these verses?

- b. How does Christ's crucifixion free us from sin and give us assurance we are no longer controlled by a sinful nature?
  
- c. What is the basis of Christian forgiveness?
  
  
- d. We are easily sidetracked and lose sight of our calling as God's people. What helps you stay focused on the spiritual qualities the holy Spirit brings to your life?

### **Closing Thoughts**

One of my favorite Christian authors is Jim Cymbala, Pastor of the nondenominational Brooklyn Tabernacle Church. In his many books on power of the Holy Spirit, Pastor Cymbala writes about how many of his parishioners are former junkies, prostitutes, homosexuals, thieves, lawyers and business types whose lives hit rock bottom, only to be born anew into Christ and to have their lives radically transformed by the Holy Spirit. My story is not their story, but I have known addiction to sin as well as experiencing God's grace, and his comforting and transforming presence through the Holy Spirit. As I close out the final chapters in my life, I want to be totally yielded to God, I want to be full of the Holy Spirit in a way God intended.

The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever (1Jn 2:17).

### **Closing Prayer, Francis Ridley Havergal (Verses 1, 5, and 6)**

Take my life, and let it be  
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;  
Take my moments and my days,  
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my will, and make it Thine;  
It shall be no longer mine.  
Take my heart; it is Thine own;  
It shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour  
At Thy feet its treasure-store.  
Take myself, and I will be  
Ever, only, all for Thee.

AMEN