

Stepping from Being Unable to Empowered

Comparing Our Stories

Because of our relationship with Christ, we have genuine desire to live the Christian life. Yet we often find ourselves failing to do so. In fact, the Christian life often seems impossible to live.

My experience...

Your experience...

Since receiving Christ, to what degree have you experienced frustration in your Christian life?

Considering Our Struggles:

What thoughts and emotions occur when you are unable to do something you want to do? Why?

When we are frustrated with our inability to live the Christian life, we should consider four possible reasons:

We lack the necessary power or ability to live the Christian life.

We have the power and ability, but we don't know that we have it.

We know we have the power and ability, but we don't know how to use it.

We know how to use the power and ability, but we choose not to use it.

In what follows, we will discover the first reason isn't a possibility for a true believer, and we will begin to learn about the power we have been given and how we are to use it.

Think about it:
Suppose you did everything you could to imitate a world-class musician, a professional athlete, or another famous person. The level of frustration you would experience would be in direct proportion to the difference in ability between you and your hero.
Jesus Christ is the only one who ever perfectly lived the Christian life. We are to imitate Him (Ephesians 5:1-2). How much difference is there between His ability to live the Christian life and yours?

Summary: When a person begins a relationship with Christ, it's important to grow in the experience of the Spirit in order to understand spiritual truth and have the power to live the Christian life. God's design is for us to be filled (that is, directed and empowered) by the Holy Spirit as an ongoing experience.

Taking Steps

Read Ephesians 5:18. What are we commanded to avoid? Why? What are we commanded to do?

The Spirit-filled life is the Christ-directed life by which Christ lives His life in and through us in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We are filled with the Spirit by faith.

Jesus pictured believers as coming to Him to drink from the living water, which is His Spirit (John 7:37-39). Are you thirsty?

P – Persevere in your desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Do you desire to be filled (that is, directed and empowered) with the Spirit? It all starts with desire. Will you persevere in your desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

R – Repent Are you turning from known sin, confessing it to God and pursuing what is right?

A – Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit to do what He wants you to do.

Y – Yield Are you surrendering control of your life to Christ? Will you take steps of obedience and serve others for His name's sake?

E – Expect Based on what the Scriptures say, will you expect God to come through, even reward you?

R – Risk How will you take a risk to see God come through? How will you risk laying your life down for people in your church, your family, and those who do not know Jesus as Lord and Savior

If so, pray in faith asking God to fill you with His Spirit as He commanded you to be. Thank Him that He will direct and empower your life as you continue to trust Him.

Exploring the Solution

Paul is writing to a group of believers struggling to live consistent Christian lives. They have become divisive and even formed cliques, claiming to follow different leaders. In this section, Paul is discussing the power or ability needed to understand God's truth.

1 Corinthians 2:9-3:3

9However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" - 10 but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. 14The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: 16"For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. 3:1Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. 2I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. 3You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?

Circle the word *Spirit* each time the word is used.

Who is the Spirit?

The Spirit works in many ways in the believer's life. What is one of His purposes according to 2:12? What will he receive according to 2:9-10?

Three spiritual conditions are described in this passage. Note how each spiritual condition influences the Spirit's ability to fulfill this purpose.

1. What is the spiritual condition of the person in 2:14?

How much spiritual truth does this person comprehend? Why?

2. What is the spiritual condition of the person in 2:15-16?

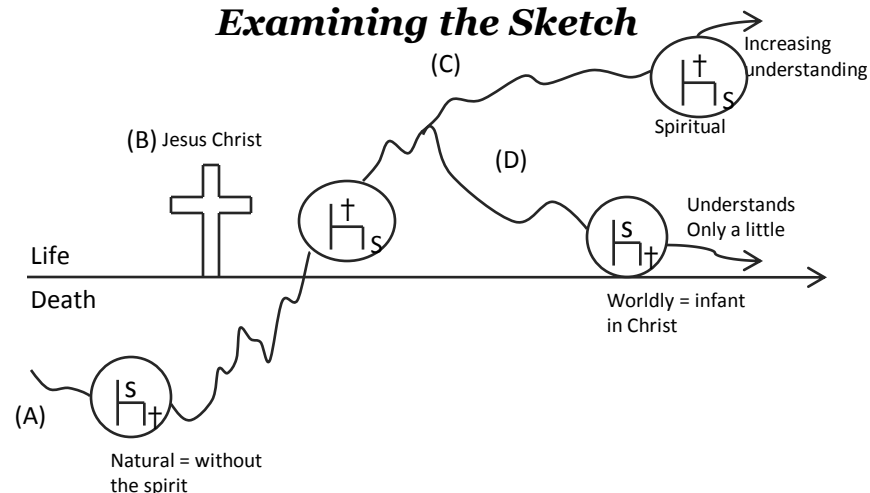
How much spiritual truth is this person able to comprehend? Why?

3. What is the spiritual condition of the people in 3:1-3?

How much spiritual truth are they able to comprehend? Why?

How would you summarize what Paul is saying about the Spirit and our spiritual condition?

Examining the Sketch



The Issue: What is God's design for the Christian Life?

- The lower circle represents my life before I received Christ. What was my spiritual condition? What was true of my ability to understand the things of God? Why?
- When I received Christ and He entered my life, I became spiritually alive and was given the gift of the Holy Spirit promised to every true believer (John 7:37-39) This is what the Bible calls the Baptism of the Spirit.
- God intends for me to continue growing in my relationship with Him, learning how to live the Christian life and relying on His Spirit to work within me to give me power and understanding. According to Galatians 5:22-23, what would be the result? This happens as we consistently follow the Spirit or are filled with the Spirit.
- But there is another possibility. I could fail to grow in my Christian life and never learn how to experience the power God has given me by His Spirit. What would my life be like then?

(It is important to note that there are individuals who may think they are Christians but who have made insincere decisions for Christ. They may have believed facts about Jesus but have not transferred their faith from themselves to Jesus Christ. The reason they fail to experience the Christian life or grow spiritually is that Christ's Spirit is not in their life.)